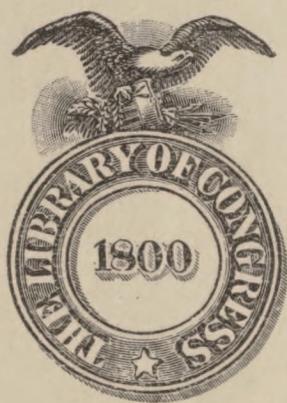


RUTH KIMBALL
GARDINER



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HEART OF A GIRL



She rewrote it, time after time, trying to better it.

The Heart of a Girl

By

RUTH KIMBALL GARDINER

Illustrated by

CHARLES LOUIS HINTON

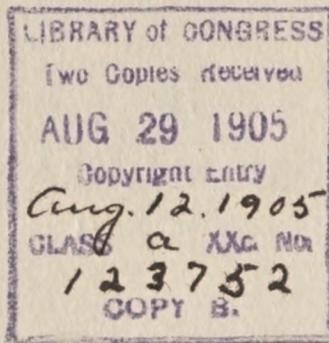


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To

My Father

CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. "S'POS'N".....	I
II. THE FREE-THINKER.....	13
III. PARTNERS IN CRIME.....	26
IV. THE LAST OF FRED DOUGLAS.....	42
V. CITIZEN OF THE SCHOOL WORLD.....	53
VI. MEN WERE DECEIVERS EVER.....	66
VII. WHEN THE WORM TURNED.....	79
VIII. THE WEAKNESS OF GOLD.....	89
IX. JULIA.....	102
X. A ROMANCE.....	114
XI. A BROKEN BOND.....	127
XII. AN IDEAL AND A REALITY.....	143
XIII. IN SAFE PLACES.....	156
XIV. A NAME ON A FAN.....	169
XV. GLENDA.....	190
XVI. A POINT OF ORDER.....	203
XVII. THE MARTYRDOM OF CHARLES I.....	219
XVIII. A WAY OUT.....	232
XIX. THE POT AND THE KETTLE.....	247
XX. THE DAY OF THE POT.....	271
XXI. PRINCE FORTUNATUS.....	290
XXII. THE REAL MARCIA.....	306
XXIII. A SPLENDID WORLD.....	321
XXIV. PRINCESS FORTUNATA.....	335
XXV. AGAINST ODDS.....	351
XXVI. PALMA NON SINE PULVERE.....	367

ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
SHE REWROTE IT, TIME AFTER TIME, TRYING TO BETTER IT.....	<i>Frontispiece.</i> ✓
MARGIE STOPPED SWINGING HER FEET. SHE WAS LEFT ALONE IN A CHILDLESS WORLD.....	8
"I AM STILL STUDYING IT," SHE SAID.....	85
TOWARD HER NEW FRIEND HER ATTITUDE WAS ALTOGETHER THAT OF DEVOTEE.....	102 ✓

HEART OF A GIRL

CHAPTER I.

“S’POS’N.”

MARGARET CARLIN’s school days really began a year before she was sent to school. She was nearly six years old when she was enrolled in the First Reader class, but at five she felt herself already a school girl.

The Gordonsville school began, or, as they said in Gordonsville, “took up,” on the first Monday in September. On that first Monday of September, when she was nearly five, she went out, as usual, after breakfast to sit on the gate post. On most mornings her stay on the tall post was not long. George Budd, who lived across the street, always came out as soon as he saw her, and then there was the long day before them to play in. This morning, however, George did not come. Margie swung her feet and waited. She swung them in a new way, the way the new little girl she had seen in Sunday-school the day before swung hers, round and round in a sort of a circle. It seemed to Margie a very elegant accomplishment.

Presently her sister Betty, five years her senior, came down the walk and out the gate. She carried books under her arm, and a lunch box, and Margie knew she was going to school. Margie had been there once with her, and had drawn pictures on her slate. School, she remembered, was not a very pleasant place, though it had made her feel important to go as a visitor with Betty. She admired Betty very much, and had practised on Georgie Budd something she had seen her do at school. Betty had walked up to the bench in the yard where the water-buckets stood, and had thrown a dipperful of water high in the air, saying:

“What goes up must come down,
On your head or on the ground.”

The girls laughed and ran screaming when Betty did it, but Georgie didn’t know about it and the water had spoiled his new shirtwaist. He had been so cross about it that he wouldn’t play “S’pos’n’” all day. “S’pos’n’” was such fun. You could say: “S’pos’n’ I had a doll that was alive,” or “S’pos’n’ we could catch a fairy,” or “S’pos’n’ Christmas came every Sunday,” or any other beautiful thing you could think of. Georgie liked to play “S’pos’n’” about things that made you scary—things like the world coming to an end, or the plagues of Egypt, or the

bears that ate the children in the Bible. Georgie was never scared by the things he thought up. He always knew just what he would do if the bears tried to eat him. He would run home and get his father's gun and shoot them. He could outrun any bear that ever was, he felt sure, but when Margie, safe in the tall willow tree, dared him to say, "Go up, Bald-head," to old Dr. Felton, Georgie didn't do it. He wasn't afraid of bears, but he didn't think it would be polite to sass an old gentleman. Margie thought of dozens of lovely things to suppose, and wondered why Georgie didn't come out.

The Taylor children from next door came down the street, and they had books, too. Luella paused as she passed the gate to show her new dress.

"It's got a sham skirt," she announced. "Maw says they're all the rage now."

Margie did not answer. It seemed to her that all the children in that end of town were going to school. She began to feel very much left out, but she swung her feet in the new way, and waited for George.

At last he came. His mother was with him, and she stopped at the door to lock it and tuck the key under the mat. George came on down to the gate. He had on a new suit and copper-toed boots with red tops, and he carried a lunch pail.

"Come on over," shouted Margie.

"I can't," Georgie answered, importantly.
"I'm going to school."

Margie stopped swinging her feet. She was left alone in a childless world.

After a long while she scrambled down and went around to the kitchen. Old black Jule might tell her some more about the h'ants. Black Jule was washing, and couldn't be bothered. Margie wandered down into the orchard to the place where she and Georgie had made the graveyard. It had begun with the burial of one chicken, and the tiny mound looked so well that they had made other graves, burying corn-cob dolls and twigs. Each grave had a "lucky rock" on it, and they had scoured the branch clear out as far as the fence to Ballam's pasture to find those smooth, round, white pebbles. Margie was too lonely to find pleasure even in the graveyard. Clearly, the only thing left for her was Belinda Betts, her doll.

She went back to the house and into the sitting-room. Mrs. Carlin was sitting by the window sewing and singing. There was a pane of blue glass in the window, and some people thought that light coming through blue glass was good for the health. Mrs. Carlin did not think so herself, but Cousin Cyrus did, and had put the blue glass there himself. Margie thought it did Belinda Betts a great deal of good. Be-

linda Betts was ill very often. Twice she had died and been buried, once in the ash-hopper at George's house, and once down in the orchard, but her grave down there was too large to look well, George thought, and Margie was glad to dig her up. Margie loved her devotedly. She was not like the beautiful wax dolls that came at Christmas and made you get up every morning with your heart in your mouth for fear the wax had cracked. The wax always did crack sooner or later, even if you were careful to leave the doll near the stove at night, and even before it cracked, the doll's face was dirty. You could wash it with melted butter, but it never looked the same.

Belinda Betts was so satisfactory. She was neither wax nor china. She was a piece of blanket rolled up and sewed tight. She had shoe buttons for eyes, and white thread sewed over and over in a lump for a nose, and a long, red stitch for a mouth. Burying didn't hurt her, and you could have her fall out of the willow tree —it was really a balloon, when you said "s'pos'n'" and the ground below was an ocean —without hurting her at all. She had been scalped by Indians and carried off by giants ever so many times.

Margie took her out of the cupboard under the book-case, and laid her in the blue light.

"I think she's going to die," she said.

"Why not give her some medicine?" Margie's mother said.

"There isn't anybody to play doctor," Margie objected.

Mrs. Carlin looked up.

"Has Georgie gone to school?" she asked.

"Yes," said Margie. "Everybody's gone. They've all got books and they're gone."

"Well, you'll be going next year," said her mother.

Grown people had such strange ways of talking. They talked about next year as if it were this afternoon.

"I want to go now," Margie said.

"Then we'll play you're going," said her mother. "It will be nicer than real going because you can come back when you want to. Georgie can't come home till four o'clock."

"He took his lunch," said Margie, reluctant to content herself with mere play.

"So shall you," said her mother, "and you'll feel exactly like Georgie."

Margie's pleasure in the make-believe increased as its reality grew. There was her new gingham dress to put on, and her new shoes. They hadn't copper toes, but except for that they seemed to her almost as fine as Georgie's boots, and they laced up on the inside. Her mother took down the red and black shawl and the Sunday hat with the gilt bee on it. Margie

began to feel as dressed up as Luella Taylor. She selected her primer from the book shelves, and when her mother brought her a tin pail with lunch in it, she was ready to start. The pail was larger than the one Georgie carried, and the two apples in it rattled about noisily, but it looked very real. Margie took it in one hand, and, tucking the primer under her arm, as Betty carried her books, set out. She walked past the kitchen.

"Where you goin'?" old Jule called.

"I'm going to school," said Margie, proudly.

Old Jule chuckled as she bent above the wash-tub again. Her laughter was never offensive, as the laughter of other grown people sometimes was. It never meant that one had used the wrong word or that one had showed fear of anything. It was always a laugh of approval.

Margie walked up and down the orchard, then back, past the hen house, and down to the barn. She was holding her book and her lunch pail in the right way, and it made her feel as important as Georgie. Black Sam was dozing on a box at the stable door.

"Whar you goin'?" he asked.

"I'm going to school," Margie answered, marching up and down before him.

"You certainly ain't gittin' there fast," said Sam.

His tone seemed to imply that he was not im-

pressed. Margie walked away, and down through the orchard again, to the branch and the willow tree. It was a very large willow, or perhaps it may have been four willows planted together, for one had only to take a high step, and there one was between great trunks, two on each side. The tree broke the line of the fence which separated the Carlin place from the garden of the German family next door. The family was named Wagenhals, and there were Freda and Karl, who were nearly grown, and Gretchen, who was older than Betty Carlin, and Grandma and Grandpa Wagenhals, and Grossmutter, who was Grandma's mother. Grandpa Wagenhals was a carpenter, and in his shop near the house Margie always found delightful, odd-shaped blocks, and long shavings as yellow and evenly curled as the locks of the Princess in the fairy story.

Margie scrambled through the gate the willow made, and walked over to the shop. The door was locked, and she turned toward the house. There sat Grossmutter by the window sewing carpet rags. Grossmutter did not speak English, but she smiled in answer to most questions and shook her head in answer to others, so that Margie had no difficulty in talking to her.

Grossmutter looked up inquiringly as Margie entered the bright, clean kitchen.

"I'm going to school this morgen," she said.



Margie stopped swinging her feet. She was left alone in a childless world.

"Morgen" was a word she and Grossmutter both knew.

"So?" said Grossmutter.

"Ja," said Margie.

"Ach, Herr Je!" said Grossmutter.

Grandma Wagenhals came in from the front room.

"To school already!" she said, admiringly.
"And a book!"

"It's a primer," Margie explained, "but I can read it."

She opened it at a page where there were pictures with words printed under them.

"C-a-t, cat," she spelled, proudly. "D-o-g, dog; r-a-t, mouse."

"Wunderschön!" said Grandma. "And this?" She pointed at words on a page where there were no pictures.

"I haven't got that far yet," Margie explained.

"And writing?" asked Grandma.

Now, Margie was not sure about writing. She had watched her mother write many times, and with a pencil and paper she could make marks that looked to her very like what her mother put down. There were wriggly lines and tall ones, with crosses on them, and here and there a dot. Her mother could read what Margie wrote just as soon as Margie told her what it was, but of late the little girl had begun to

have the feeling that perhaps it was only one of her mother's make-believes. She fancied, too, that all grown people made believe about writing, and that nobody could really read the curious marks other people made. Reading in the primer was a very different thing. One had the picture then to tell what the word was. She knew that grown people did make believe. Georgie Budd's father always made believe to be afraid Belinda Betts would bite, when Belinda Betts was only a blanket doll. She wondered if Grandma could read her writing.

"I can write a little if I have a slate," she said.

Grandma brought Karl's slate. She was always jumping up to do things for people who came to see her, not at all like Grandmother, who was father's mother, and sat in a chair all day long. Grandmother was one thing, and Grandma, who was no kin at all, was another. One had to wait on Grandmother and hear her recite,

"But children, you should never let
Such angry passions rise,"

when one was cross.

Margie had been to visit Grandmother, who lived where the cars went to, the summer before, and she was not so fond of her as she was of Grandma Wagenhals. She would never have tried to find out about writing from Grandmother.

She took Karl’s slate.

“What do you want me to write?” she asked. Grandma thought for a moment.

“Write ‘I want some coffee-cake,’ ” she said.

Margie scrawled a line across the slate, put on a cross or a dot here and there, and held it up.

“Ach, liebes Kind!” said Grandma. “So you shall have the cake for those beautiful writings.”

It was a wonderful cake, and one always had it at Grandma’s. It was raised like bread, but sweet, with brown sugar on its shiny crust. Margie munched her piece in great content. Grandma took the tin bucket and laid some of the cake in that.

“That is for mother,” she said. “You will carry it, not?”

Margie ran home through the willow and up through the orchard and into the sitting-room. Mother was delighted with the coffee-cake. One couldn’t carry anything home to mother without being glad, for mother was always so pleased.

“I had some, too,” Margie said.

“I hope you didn’t ask for it,” Mrs. Carlin said.

“I didn’t have to,” Margie explained. “Grandma told me to write, ‘I want some coffee-cake,’ on Karl’s slate, and when I did it she gave me some. I didn’t even hint. Grandma read my writing as easy as you do.”

She climbed into her mother's lap and settled down for a "talk-a-bye."

"Sing 'Into a Ward,'" she begged.

Mrs. Carlin rocked her in her arms and sang. Margie was thinking.

"Mother," she said presently, "honest Injun, can anybody read writing without knowing beforehand what you write?"

"Some people can," Mrs. Carlin admitted. "It depends on who does the writing."

"Could anybody read mine?"

"I'm afraid not, honey," Mrs. Carlin answered.

"Well," said Margie, thoughtfully, "I'm glad. I'm going to write that Luella Taylor is a stuck-up, and then I'll tell her it means she's nice."

"Do you think that would be right?" Mrs. Carlin asked.

Margie considered.

"Not Sunday right," she said, "but just kind of other day right. And, anyway, she won't know what I really did write about her. And won't you sing 'Billy Boy'? I reckon I'm glad I didn't go to the really school."

CHAPTER II.

THE FREE-THINKER.

THE next September brought the real school days. In the interval Margie had learned to read a little more and to write. She was, therefore, made a member of the First Reader class at once. She was glad to escape going into the Chart class. Chart was a new word to her, and in hearing it she missed the final t. Char' class had an unpleasant sound. It was associated in her mind with charcoal, a thing known to be grimy, and it seemed to her a term of reproach. Children in the Char' class were unclean, like persons in the Bible. Miss Cherry's manner made this quite evident.

Miss Cherry was the teacher, and was considered very strict. For even boys and girls who could read and spell, she had no words of approval, and she had a system of marking the deportment records that made it almost impossible for any one to end the week with a "perfect." In Miss Cherry's room you stood up to read and to spell. There was a chalk line drawn on the floor, and as long as the lesson lasted you

must stand with your heels together, and turned-out toes just touching this. If your toes crossed the line, any one who saw them and told Miss Cherry could go above you. There was a demerit mark for you if you used both hands to hold your book when you read. There was another if you unfolded your arms in spelling class. Dropping a slate or pencil counted against you, and as for whispering, that was a sin so deadly that you had to stand on the floor. It was only a little less wicked than being tardy.

Altogether, going to school was not so pleasant as Margie had pictured it, but knowing Lena Bean made up for a great deal. Lena Bean was her seatmate. Back of each ear Lena wore a short braid of hair, with red yarn plaited into it and tied at the ends. The braids stuck up smartly when Lena bent over her slate, and Margie, whose own hair was curly, admired them immensely. Lena was in the good graces of Miss Cherry, because she was quick about arithmetic. Arithmetic and discipline were Miss Cherry's graven images. To find favor in her eyes, one must be able to do sums and to sit perfectly still. When the children were restless, it was Miss Cherry's custom to call them to attention, and to oblige them to sit perfectly motionless till she dropped a pin. Margie's first experience with the pin was not a happy one. She felt twitchy the instant that she was told to sit

perfectly still, but, anxious to please, she stiffened her muscles and held her breath, exploding in a loud gasp just in time to drown the tinkle of the pin. Good intentions did not prevent her from having a demerit marked against her.

As for arithmetic, she was blackmarked in that from the first. She could count. She could even say the multiplication table as far as sixes if she were allowed to count very fast, without interruption, but she could not do the simplest sum in mental arithmetic, or, at least, she could not do it as Miss Cherry required it done. She could add only after she had translated each number into concrete fingers, and Miss Cherry forbade that.

"Think, Margaret," she would cry, sternly. "Use your brain, not your fingers. Think."

Margaret gave herself up despairingly as one unable to think. She had not the remotest idea how to go about using a brain. Lena was wonderful to her. Lena knew all the Roman numerals, too, and Margie was never certain of anything between three I's three and ix nine. She knew nine, because ix was the tail of six, and nine was six upside down. Lena required no such association of ideas to tell her what anything was. Lena could add three figures in the twinkling of an eye. To Margie's repeated plea to be told how she did it, she returned an invincible and discouraging answer:

"I just think 'em quick."

Lena was wonderful in many another way. She was a storehouse of school tradition and child superstition. She delighted in horrors, and all she knew she imparted with authority to Margie. She showed the dark cellar under the high stoop of the school-house, and gave it its school name, "The Dungeon." Once, Lena said, a boy who talked back to the principal had been put there, and left till he starved to death. Lena maintained that the principal's power was absolute. Even Miss Cherry was free to do terrible things if she chose. There was a little girl who had been made to stand on the floor, close to the stove, for whispering, till the side of her face was one solid blister.

Lena admitted that these things had happened before she had started to school, but one could not doubt that they were matters of fact. Margie believed in them as implicitly as she did in the sudden death that overtook any one who jumped the rope one hundred times without stopping. Lena knew of a little girl who had died in just that way, and as for the little girl who had taken diphtheria from eating snow, Lena had actually seen her funeral. Lena herself had no fear of diphtheria. She never ate snow, and she was further protected by wearing about her neck a small bag filled with what she called "assafitity."

Lena's information ranged beyond the limits of school life. No little pitcher ever had larger or quicker ears. She picked up and told to Margie bits of gossip and scandal concerning most of the people whose names Margie knew. Invariably she believed the worst, and failed to believe only when the worst was happily beyond her understanding. It was due to Lena Bean, indirectly, that Margie's desire to be a free-thinker sprang into life.

They were sitting together one noon recess, on the stile in front of the school-house, when old Major Winchester passed. Margie knew him by sight. He was a stately old gentleman who lived quite alone, except for his servants, in a large house at the edge of the town. He was not "kin" to any one in the town, and that, added to a certain formality in his manners and his mode of living, set him apart from the rest of Gordonsville. His house stood high in Lena's list of haunted places. Lena's eyes brightened when she saw him.

"If you'll cross your heart to never let on I told you," she said mysteriously, "I'll tell you what I heard my ma say about old Major Winchester."

Margie crossed her heart, and added a wish to fall dead in her tracks if she ever let on. Lena lowered her voice.

"Ma says he's a free-thinker," she announced.

"What's a free-thinker?" Margie asked.

Lena evaded the question, but Margie persisted. Lena was forced to confess that she did not know.

"But I reckon it's something mighty bad," she went on, "because ma said it like as if she didn't want me to hear, and I didn't dast to ask."

"It can't be bad," said Margie, on reflection. "My father speaks to him, and I reckon my father wouldn't do that if he was anyways bad."

"Well," said Lena, a trifle crestfallen, "that's what ma said, anyway, and she said it like as if it was bad. Anyway, you crossed your heart to never tell."

Margie repeated the crossing, but the obligation of secrecy weighed heavily upon her. All afternoon she pondered the matter. What could a free-thinker be?

Her mother gave her a clue. She was in the garden with Miss Lucy Tutt when Margie came home from school at four o'clock, and she was selecting plants for the winter window stands. Now and then she set aside a plant for Miss Lucy's basket, commenting on its qualities as she did so.

"I'm going to give you one of these scarlet geraniums," she said. "I've kept them cut back all summer just for the house this winter. They're such free bloomers."

Mary John knew what a free bloomer was.

Instantly she understood what a free-thinker must be. It was not something bad. It was a person who put forth thoughts as freely and as easily as the scarlet geranium its flowers. It was exactly what Miss Cherry wanted her to be. She wondered if Miss Cherry herself were a free-thinker.

It was difficult to obtain information on the subject without running the risk of falling dead in her tracks by violating her oath. She ventured, however, to put a leading question to her mother that evening.

“Are there many free-thinkers in this town?” she asked.

“Goodness me!” exclaimed her mother. “Where on earth did you hear that word? Do you know what it means?”

“No, ma’am,” said Margie, not prepared to formulate her idea.

Her mother looked relieved.

“I hope you never will know,” she said. “No, I suppose old Major Winchester is really the only out and out free-thinker in town, and one ought not to judge him too harshly. He has had a great deal of sorrow, and he is a very good man.”

Margie grasped only so much of the speech as to let her know that old Major Winchester was the only free-thinker in town. If one wanted to know how to go about becoming a

free-thinker, then, it would be necessary to ask him. Margie wondered why Miss Cherry was not considered a free-thinker, but, perhaps, a teacher had no need to think. It was a teacher's duty to compel other people to think, if they could find out how to do it.

She turned the matter over in her mind for several days before she resolved to make an effort to speak to old Major Winchester. Then she struggled to free her resolve from the shackles of her shyness. Major Winchester seemed to her more unapproachable than the minister or Judge Walker. He was only a degree less awe-inspiring than the principal himself. However, anything was preferable to continuing to stand bewildered and helpless before Miss Cherry's scornful command to think. Margie was goaded to the point where she was ready to dare the utmost.

Major Winchester passed her home every morning on his way downtown. It was on a Friday that Margie manœuvred herself out the gate just in time to meet him.

“Howdy do,” she said, indistinctly.

Major Winchester looked down in some surprise.

“Howdy, little lady,” he said, and walked on.

For an instant Margie felt that she was about to step out and walk beside him. She took one step. Then, utter dumbness seized her, and she

merely scurried past him, hoping every moment that something would stay her feet and give her words to say. The golden opportunity was lost. Still, she had spoken to him, and he had answered. At least, the ice was broken.

Saturday afternoon she set out to visit Lena Bean. She had a small doll and what she called her "doll rags" in a cigar box under her arm, and her mind was so full of pleasant imaginings that she forgot Miss Cherry's scorn and the desirability of becoming a free-thinker.

Lena Bean lived in a street beyond the Court House, which raised its Corinthian columns, umber-stained in their capitals, in the middle of the Square. An iron fence, mounted on a wide stone base, surrounded the Square, and no Gordonsville child ever passed that way without climbing up to walk on the stone. Margie walked one side of the Square, and, jumping down at the corner pillar, found herself face to face with the free-thinker. This time he spoke first.

"Howdy, little lady," he said.

Margie murmured a response.

"Going my way?" the free-thinker asked.

Margie nodded. She had still two blocks to walk before she came to the street in which Lena Bean lived. Major Winchester held out two fingers. Margie took them and walked up the street beside him. She had rehearsed the speech

she meant to make to him, but it stuck in her throat. Major Winchester, having offered his fingers, seemed to forget that she was there. He said nothing, and he lengthened his stride till Margie was obliged to trot. She determined to speak when they reached the end of the first block, but she was still mute when they passed the street in which Lena Bean lived. She could think of no words in which to declare her destination. Trained to regard her elders with exaggerated deference, it seemed to her impolite to drop the fingers without suitable words of explanation, and she did not know what words one ought to use. She thought despairingly of Lena Bean and the dolls, and trotted on wretchedly, hoping Major Winchester would speak.

Suddenly a comforting idea came to her. She ceased to regret the lost visit. She determined to hold fast to the free-thinker's hand till he remembered her presence, no matter how long a time it was. When he did speak she would ask him the question. She said it over and over to herself. To find out how to be a free-thinker seemed to her the end and aim of existence.

They passed up Main street, the child trotting doggedly beside the absent-minded old gentleman, and turned into College avenue. Margie was already a long way from home. She rehearsed her speech now to the rhythm of Major Winchester's steps. She could say it all in four

paces. At the beginning of the cross street which led out to Major Winchester's house, she stumbled. Major Winchester became suddenly aware of her presence.

"Are you going out this street?" he asked.

Margie's speech came out in a sort of chant.

"What—do you have to do—to get to be—a free-thinker?" she asked.

Major Winchester stopped short.

"Bless my soul!" he cried. "What do you mean, child?"

The first plunge taken, Margie went ahead boldly.

"I'm so dumb about mental arithmetic," she said. "I can't add. I don't use my brain like Miss Cherry wants me to. I wanted to ask you how to think. You're a free-thinker, ain't you? Can't you show me how to be one, too?"

She paused, quite out of breath, and Major Winchester stood still while the meaning of her words took shape in his mind. He coughed behind his hand, and then he looked down at the wistful child thoughtfully. The earnestness of her appeal was irresistible.

"Come along home with me," he said, "and maybe we can straighten this thing out."

Margie took his hand again, and poured out her troubles as she walked.

She showed her mind to him as Miss Cherry had never glimpsed it. They went in at the tall

swinging gate, and up the gravel walk to the house. Major Winchester led the way to the library. There before the open fire Margie continued her recital.

"I can't add unless I feel of my fingers," she said, "and Miss Cherry won't let me do that. 'You must use your brain,' she says, but I don't seem to learn to add at all with my brain."

"Margie," said the free-thinker, "I'll tell you a secret. I always count on my fingers."

"Do you wriggle them?" asked Margie.

"No," said the old gentleman, "but I did when I was your age. I've been at it so long now that I don't need to wriggle them. I can count ever so many fingers all at once. So can you when you learn to know your fingers well. I don't even move mine now. I just think them quick."

These were exactly Lena Bean's words, but, somehow, from the old gentleman they sounded hopeful. Counting on one's fingers was not wrong in itself, then. It was the slowness with which one counted that constituted the offense. Margie began to see the possibility of adding with lightning speed when she had learned her fingers well enough—learned them so well that they added six at a time, or eight, instead of one. She breathed a deep sigh. Then she thought of old Major Winchester, seeing him in a new light.

"Why," she said, "then you're not so very different from me, after all, are you? You're not really a free-thinker, at all."

The old gentleman smiled a little wistfully.

"I don't believe I am," he said. "I reckon I'm just an ignorant child like you."

CHAPTER III.

PARTNERS IN CRIME.

MISS CHERRY was Margaret's first teacher in the real school, and Lena Bean was her first seat-mate. Miss Cherry taught her reading and writing and arithmetic, but Lena Bean taught her things which seemed to her of much greater importance. It was Lena Bean who made her a citizen of the school world.

The first thing Lena taught her was the proper place of boys in the world. From the high stone stoop of the school-house, the entrance which only the teachers ever used, to the stile, there ran a wide plank walk. To the right of this was the boys' play-ground; to the left, the girls'. Margie had always liked playing with Georgie Budd in the "s'pos'n'" days, but now they were friends no longer. Georgie was a boy, and he played on the boys' side. He was no longer even Georgie. The teacher called him George, and the boys called him Buck.

Lena disapproved boys altogether. They were rough and rude and played marbles for keeps. You could not trust them at all. They were even bad in school, and none of them but

Otto Wolf, who was a "sissy," cared about being head of the class. Margie never could understand why anyone wanted to be bad in school. Teachers had such unpleasant ways toward one if one didn't study. They kept one after school, and sent one to the principal. George Budd had been sent up twice and whipped once. Margie wondered how he endured the humiliation of having the other boys and girls know what had happened to him. It mortified her exceedingly just to have some one go above her in spelling. But Lena said boys were different. Boys, for example, couldn't jump the rope. The wide plank walk was an ideal place for ropes, and it was a great day for Margie when, after swaying back and forth for a long time, she finally caught the rhythm of the turning and ran in successfully "back door." Boys couldn't even stand in and jump. George tried it one day out of sheer bravado. The teetering balance between jumps that came so naturally to Margie was beyond him. His leaps were pitiful to see, and he always missed on the third turn of the rope. Margie could do plain jumping up to ninety-nine times. Nobody ever went beyond that because everybody knew about the little girl who fell dead at a hundred jumps. Margie could "bake bread" and "read the Bible," skipping arm in arm with Lena. She could even jump "pepper and salt" till the turning was too fast for any-

one. By the end of her first year she could do anything that Lena did. She knew all the outdoor games, and all the indoor games. On bright days she played jacks with Lena on the stone steps. On rainy days they played "Green Gravel" and "King William" in the basement playroom. Sometimes, especially when they were in Miss Blake's room—Miss Blake taught No. 5, and was not strict—they stayed in at recess and rubbed the blackboards clean for the teacher. The great fun of that was in the freedom it gave you to draw candles. You drew the candle and then you rubbed chalk in the groove of the eraser and blew it hard against the board. It made a cloudy splat that was exactly like a flame.

Now, between six and eleven you can go through a great many rooms if you are promoted steadily. Between six and eleven, too, there comes a time when you find out that Lena Bean is sometimes mistaken. Margie was only in No. 4 when she found out that what Lena called "the dungeon" was only the cellar where the janitor kept the coal. It was not a place where the principal locked up bad boys, and nobody had ever starved to death in there, as Lena said. The last vestige of her belief in Lena's infallibility fled when they were in No. 6 together. Margie was absent two days, and during that time Miss Petworth read out the

words of a song to be written down and learned. Miss Petworth was disagreeable. It was no part of her plan to help one make up lessons lost through absence. Margie was obliged to ask Lena for a copy of the song. Lena gave it gladly.

“The myrtle and the cypress vine,
The passing flour, the cunning wine,
The farmer reads his old combine,
Two decks the fairy bower.”

There seemed no sense to it, but a great many songs lacked that. Margie learned it exactly as Lena had it. However, it puzzled her. She knew that many farmers read her father’s paper, which was the *Republican*, and he brought home every week great bundles of exchanges—papers and magazines. There was one called *The Living Age*. She supposed the “Old Combine” was something of the sort. She asked Sister Betty about it. Betty immediately explained Lena’s errors. The verse ran:

“The myrtle and the cypress vine,
The passion flower, the columbine,
To form a wreath they all combine
To deck the fairy bower.”

Further, Betty told about it at the dinner table, and everybody laughed. Margie went back to school in no pleasant frame of mind toward

Lena. Lena had exposed her to ridicule, and she never believed in Lena again. Lena had heard that the Governor was coming to visit Gordonsville, but Margie did not believe it. Lena said, too, that the Board of Education had told the principal he ought to have the children do a fire drill once a week. They ought to be trained to march out quickly in case of fire. Margie did not believe that, either.

However, Lena was right about both these things. The Governor was expected to visit Gordonsville on a speech-making tour, and the fire drill soon became a thing to be expected. One tap of the bell was the signal for it. The instant that was heard, everybody dropped books, formed in line, and marched down and out. Miss Petworth's room was on the third floor. The stairs began at each end of the long hall, and wound round and round to the basement door. It made one feel weak in the knees to look down from the top landing to the bottom of the stair well. Lena knew about a boy who leaned too far over the banister and fell headlong to the basement, so that when they picked him up every bone in his body was broken. Margie doubted it. Many of his bones might have been broken, but not all; and what was the name of the boy?

Lena's only reply to this was, "All right for you."

And for two days after that they sat very far apart in their seat. At recess Lena switched her skirts and went off to play with Susie Taylor. Margie divided her chewing gum with Lucy Denby. She made up a secret with Lucy. They referred to it mysteriously before the other girls as "Sugar." Lena said they might have secrets till they were black in the face for all she cared, and she and Susie had one which they spoke of as "Buttons." Both Margie and Lena were very unhappy because they had been friends and seat-mates all the way from No. 1 to No. 6, and a friendship like that is not to be broken off so suddenly without regret.

Margie told her mother about it, and it seemed to her that her mother was not sympathetic.

"There was a little boy quite badly hurt there years ago," she said. "Lena exaggerated. The stairs are dangerous and I hope you always go down close to the wall."

And for the rest of their quarrel, Mrs. Carlin dismissed it with a careless:

"Oh, you'll make it up soon."

They did not walk on the same side of the street going home. And at the corner where their ways parted they dallied no longer, each trying to get the other's "face tag" last.

On most other Saturdays, Lena had come to see Margie, or Margie had gone to visit her,

but on the Saturday after their quarrel, Margie stayed at home, and played alone. George Budd was alone that day, too, and in the middle of the forenoon he came over. He sometimes did that still when the other boys in the neighborhood were well away, for he liked Margie. Of course, you couldn't walk to school with a girl, or pay any attention to her after you got there, unless you wanted the boys to say, "There goes Georgie and his girl," but Saturdays things were different. One Saturday he had even brought Margie into the game the Taylor boys and the big Melton boys were playing. The biggest Melton boy told him to. The big willow down by the Wagenhals' fence and the locust tree with the wild grape vine over it at the very back of the Carlins' two acres were splendid forts, one for soldiers and one for Indians. There were no other places in the neighborhood to compare to them, and it is a principle of life that you can't play in our yard without letting us play, too. Margie was allowed to be the captive. The biggest Taylor boy would seize her by the hair and brandish his tomahawk, and down the brave boys in blue, Hugh Melton at their head, would come charging to the rescue. The Indians were always defeated, and sometimes this discouraged them so much that they wanted to be soldiers for a while. Hugh Melton, however, was larger than Jim Taylor, and that set

tled it. Margie had good hair for scalping, and made a splendid captive. It was silly of her, of course, to cry "King's Ex" when the scalping became too real, and nobody but a girl would think that saying "Lick lock, lick lock all around the house" would keep the Indians—sometimes Hugh changed off and was Sitting Bull, instead of General Grant—from breaking into the fort and carrying her off. It was all very exciting, but not the game one cared to play every Saturday. This Saturday she was glad the Melton boys and the Taylors had gone off after hickory nuts. George was at least better than no one.

"I—ay ow—nay ome—say ing—thay," he said, as he came around to the carriage house where Margie was watching the kittens.

"Ot—whay?" asked Margie. She spoke Hog Latin as well as he did.

"Ild—way apes—gray," said George.

After that he spoke English, which was easier if one had much to say.

"I betcha I know where they're ripe," he said. "Let's go out to Ballam's pasture and get some."

"All right," said Margie. "I'll go ask mother."

"I don't have to ask my mother," said Georgie. "When she asks me where I'm going I just say, 'Oh, just off.' "

"You do, too, ask her," retorted Margie.

"I don't. I'm going downtown to-night to

see the torch-light parade and I don't have to even tell her where I'm going."

"You dassent go without telling her," Margie insisted.

"Well, I've been to one torch-light parade already, and I didn't tell her where I was going."

"Yes; and your father took you. We were down at my father's office and I saw you. And it was when your mother was in Jerseyville."

"Well," said Georgie, "you ain't going to see the parade to-night and I am. My Uncle Joe's going to march. He's boss of it. He's got a soldier hat and a blue cape and a ballot-box torch."

"They don't wear blue capes at torch-lights," said Margie. "I saw them."

"That was the Democrat parade," said George. "They ain't nothing."

"My father's a Democrat. All nice people are."

"They ain't neither. My father's a Republican."

"That's no sign," Margie flashed back.

"My father's just as good as your father is, and better, too, Smarty. Girls don't know nothing, anyway."

Never since the world began has a woman replied to that taunt with contemptuous silence. For full two minutes the battle raged. Then George marched out the gate chanting:

“Garfield rides a white horse,
Hancock rides a mule.
Garfield is a gentleman,
And Hancock is a fool.”

And Margie, bursting with rage, stuck out her tongue and screamed.

Mrs. Carlin came to the door.

“Margie,” she said, sternly, “if I hear you talk like that again I’ll punish you.”

“Well, he began it,” Margie sobbed.

“You’re just as much to blame as he is,” her mother answered, and shut the door.

It was a cruel and unfeeling world. Her mother took sides against her. George was a hateful, mean thing, and Lena Bean—Lena Bean was the cause of it all. “I’ll fix her,” Margie said, and turned over in her mind a dozen ways of getting even. Not one of them seemed adequate, and beside, Monday was too far off to wait for. Margie decided to settle Lena Bean as she had settled everybody who offended her for a long time. There are times when you think things about fathers and mothers which cannot be said openly. Even if you say them under your breath, you are likely to be accused of “chunnering,” which is a spanking offense. Margie said the things she had to say in a deeper way than that. She had evolved a cipher and an alphabet in hieroglyphics for the

expression of her opinions. To write in hieroglyphics required a great deal of time, and if you lost the paper which told you what each mark meant you could never read what you had written. The cipher was almost as easy as plain writing. If you wanted to spell a word in it, you changed each consonant to the following one in the alphabet, and each vowel to the next vowel. "George, a bad boy," became in the cipher, "Hiushi, e cef cuz." It did Margie a world of good to put down just what she thought of George and her mother and Lena Bean and the world in general. She spent the rest of the morning on the composition. When it was finished she rolled it into a wad, carried it down into the orchard and buried it under an apple tree, which she marked with keel. That settled Lena Bean and the world. Some day, years and years and years afterward, somebody would find the paper and see how ill used she had been. A dim knowledge of the way a long-buried city had been dug up impelled her to seek the sympathy of posterity in this way. Cipher indictments mouldered under many an apple tree.

The settlement of Lena Bean was but two days buried, however, when the quarrel was patched up after a fashion, and the day after that, Margie and Lena, as partners in crime, were obliged to return to their former intimacy. Lena made the first overtures of peace. She

was deposed from her leadership in their friendship, and, doubtless, she felt it. Her peace offering was a book mark, a round mat of wool of all colors—not yarn nor zephyr, but wool in the shape fingers pluck it from stockings, or hoods, or nubias or cloaks. The red in it was from Lena's stockings, the touch of blue from the blanket on her bed, the brown a bit she had picked from her Sunday hood. The mat represented Lena's heart, and Margie accepted it. At noon recess that day she divided her cocoanut cake with Lena, and Lucy Denby and Susie Taylor no longer existed for either of them. They were not demonstrative. Neither confessed to being in the wrong. They simply ignored the past, but thereafter it was Margie who told things, and Lena who believed.

The Governor was expected almost any day now, but the exact date of his arrival could not be known in advance. He was traveling on a special train and making speeches in every town. Sometimes, even, he went into country districts, away from the railroad, to rouse the voters. On Monday they knew he was in Jerseyville—the Monday when Lena and Margie made up. On Tuesday he might drive to Shaw's Point or Spanish Needle, or, passing these by, he might come direct to Gordonsville. When he did come, some one would bring word to the janitor, and then at the tap of the bell the children would march out

to stand before the school and sing a patriotic song. Miss Petworth told them this.

"And what song shall we sing for him?" she asked.

George Budd had a favorite song. He raised his hand, quivering with eagerness.

"Well, George?" said Miss Petworth.

"'Pull for the Shore,'" shouted George.

Of course, Miss Petworth laughed. The idea of singing a hymn to a Governor. Nobody but a boy would be so silly. Margie held up her hand.

"'Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean,'" she said, with a glance of withering contempt at George.

"Why, of course," said Miss Petworth, and she laughed again. Indeed, she laughed to a quite unteacherlike extent. All the rest of the morning, and clear into the afternoon session, she was in an uncommonly good humor. She even went so far as to confer a wholly unprecedented favor on Lena and Margie.

When the A class in arithmetic went to the board to find least common multiples, the chalk box was discovered to contain only broken bits, and two erasers were too worn to use. Miss Petworth called Lena to the desk.

"I want you to go to the principal's room and ask for a box of chalk and two new erasers," she said, and out of sheer good-nature she added, "Margie may go with you."

The two ambassadors tip-toed down the hall,

giggling rapturously. The principal's room was on the floor below, and there sat the big boys and girls. It was not everybody who could march in among them in conscious rectitude and ask for chalk and erasers. Lena and Margaret felt the importance of the occasion, but they began to giggle again as soon as they were out of the room. They raced each other up the stairs, and Lena went so far as to dare Margie to race along the hall to the door of Miss Petworth's room. Margie proposed a counter-dare.

"Come on in the cloak-room," she whispered. "I've got an apple in my bucket. Let's eat it before we go back."

The cloak-room opened off the class-room, and off the corridor as well. It was roughly plastered, and at one side the bell rope came up through a wooden pump tube in the floor, to disappear through a similar tube in the ceiling. The great bell hung just over the trap door at the top of the dressing-room, and down on the first floor, directly beneath, was the closet in which the janitor stood to ring it.

Margie produced the apple and each took a bite, both thrilling with a delicious sense of wickedness. Miss Petworth would never know that they were not engaged simply on their errand.

"S'posing she finds out?" whispered Lena.

"I'm not afraid of her," whispered Margie. "Let's eat it all."

Each took another bite.

Lena looked at the bell rope.

"I dare you to touch it," she said.

A spirit of wild recklessness swept over Margie. Without a word, she reached up as high as she could and caught the rope. She never knew whether she intended to pull it or not. Possibly, Lena's frightened push dragged her hands. Over their heads pealed out a note as terrible as the crack of doom. Margie and Lena had rung the bell.

White-faced, they confronted each other. From the room beyond there came the sound of marching feet. The door opened and the line began to pass through the cloak-room, each girl lifting her cloak and hat from their hook as she passed without pausing. Lena fell into step without another glance at her fellow-criminal, and deserted her. One by one the girls passed Margie. She had been guilty of a crime unheard of in the annals of school wickedness. What would—what awful, awful thing would happen to her when they found her out? Perhaps it would be a matter for the Governor to attend to. Miss Petworth came last in the line. On the very scene of that black crime she chose to be facetious.

"Leave the poor, old stranded chalk, Margie," she said, gaily, "and pull for the shore. The Governor has come."

Margie dragged her leaden feet out the door. Tramp, tramp, the steady marching went on, down and down and around and around the stair-well. Had anybody on earth ever done anything so incredible? Ananias and Sapphira—what had they done? They hadn't rung the bell when no Governor was at hand. Oh! goodness, there outside the basement door was the principal with his visitors' smile. He was leading the way to the stone steps. He was forming the boys and girls into lines. He looked pleasant. How sickeningly awful it was! And Lena Bean ready to say she didn't do it. Surely in a moment the principal would seize her—what would he do?

Her knees were too weak to run. Running wouldn't do any good, anyway.

"He is not in sight yet," the principal was saying, "but——"

And here there burst out from some far corner of the basement, the janitor.

"Who rang that bell?" he shouted. "Who rang that bell?"

The only answer was too faint to be heard in the confusion, but it came from Lena Bean.

"I didn't," said Lena.

And, unsuspected, at the end of the line, stood the real criminal, doomed to live from that time forward with the weight of a guilty secret on her soul.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LAST OF FRED DOUGLAS.

SCHOOL was not quite the same after the day of the bell. The principal attributed the ringing to the mischief of some boy, tempted in passing. Then everybody but Lena and Margie forgot it. Once, in a dispute as to whether a ball caught on the second bounce puts the girl who batted it out or not, Lena made a threat. Margie refused to be cowed.

"If you tell on me, I'll tell on you," she said.
"You helped do it."

"I didn't really do it, though," said Lena.

"Well, you knocked Miss Petworth's ink-bottle off one morning before school," Margie retorted. "You told me so."

"I was just putting some flowers on her desk."

"Well, you knocked it off. If you tell, I'll tell," said Margie. "I know lots to tell."

Lena did not tell.

The secret weighed on Margie, however. She had never before kept anything from her mother, except, of course, the cipher and a few

personal opinions. Possibly, the bell matter would have gone into her store of reservations, without further consideration, if it had not been for the minister and a sermon he preached. He was an earnest and eloquent man, and he laid great stress on the importance of confessing one's sins. "Confess and be saved," he said impressively, three times in succession, and then he described minutely what would happen to you if you weren't saved. Margie had burned her hand on the corn-popper just the day before, and the minister's words impressed her deeply. That night, too, there was a fire in the town. Margie, who slept with Betty upstairs, heard the clanging of the fire-bell. It was the most terrifying sound in all the world. She and Betty ran shivering to the window. The sky was alight. Margie began to cry with terror.

Mrs. Carlin came up the stairs.

"Do you think it will catch our house?" Margie sobbed. Outside in the street she could hear men running.

"No, honey, no," said her mother. "It's two miles away, at least. Father is going."

Somehow, when father went to a fire, you felt safer. Father would see to things, but it was dreadful to hear the bell. Your teeth chattered so and your knees shook. There was only one thing to do, and that was to ask mother to let you go into her bed. After that you stopped

shaking and mother's voice sounded safe and comforting as she talked to you in the dark. She told you stories about the early days—when she was a baby, and the prairie wolves came to her house, when her father was away, and about how her mother threw burning brands from the fireplace out among them, and how they fought under the floor and pushed the loose boards up, and Grandmother was terribly afraid till Grandfather came home, and said the wolves wanted the venison hung outside the house beyond their reach. And she told, too, of the time Grandfather was a boy and set the prairie on fire through disputing with his brother as to whose jackknife could strike fire from flint best.

"And did he tell his father who did it?" Margie asked.

"No," said her mother, "he didn't tell for years and years."

So it was years and years before Margie told who rang the bell.

Mrs. Carlin told her something else that night—a wonderful thing. Father had decided to go into partnership with a man who owned a paper out in Dakota.

"And we are going to move out there?" Margie asked.

Moving was a new idea to her. No one she knew but George Budd had ever moved.

It took Mr. Budd more than a week to carry

their furniture in the spring wagon, and Mrs. Budd walked from the old house to the new with lamps and china in baskets, day after day. Going to Dakota would take ever so much longer than that.

"Will we be movers?" Margie asked.

"No," said her mother, "we will go in the cars."

"Movers" were people who had big farm wagons with white cloth tops built over them. Sometimes they came and stayed near Ballam's pasture for quite a long time, and lived all the while in their wagon. Now and then they came to the back door and borrowed bread and pies, but they were not like tramps, nor gypsies.

What a thing going to Dakota would be to tell Lena Bean—Lena, who had never been on the cars at all. Margie had already been to Grandmother's house, and to go there you slept on the cars, in funny beds behind curtains, all night. Father and mother had been all over the world, from Colorado to the Centennial. And Betty had been to New York and seen Central Park.

Margie felt very important. She dazzled Lena with the stories of Adams City, the big town in Dakota, where there was a boom. They found it on the map in their geographies. It looked as far away as New York, and going there meant seeing wonderful things on the way.

There was a great deal to be done before the Carlins could start. Freda Wagenhals came over and helped Mrs. Carlin sew for two weeks. After that they had to decide what things to take with them. Most of the furniture, of course, and the books and pictures, bedding and dishes—but not the real things, Matilda, the cat, and Old Sam, the horse, and Quack, the pet duck, and Brownie, the cow, and Fred Douglas, the dog.

There was something almost dreadful about seeing everything carried out of the house. It was a mixed feeling—part of it like the third of July or the day before the circus, and part of it like the marching downstairs after she and Lena rang the bell.

It gave her the strangest feeling of emptiness somewhere inside her, to see Mr. Budd come and drive Old Sam off. She wanted to cry, and Betty and mother, too, did cry. Grandma Wagenhals took Quack and Matilda, and Grandpa Wagenhals bought Brownie. George Budd was to have Fred Douglas.

He intended to train Fred, he said. A dog ought to know how to do things. What he meant to make of Fred was a bird dog. Nature in making him had not adhered rigidly to any set dog pattern. He was black, like the Milton boy's ratter, but the splotch on his breast was white. His ears were too large to be small and

too small to be large. George was sure that he was part pointer, but the smallest Taylor boy declared that no dog without a tail could be a pointer.

"He had a tail when he was a pup," Margie explained. "Black Sam chopped it off because there was a worm in the end of it, and he kept trying to run away from it, and that's what gave him fits."

"Was it a pointer tail?" George asked.

Margie could not remember.

"It was just a plain tail," she said. "A black tail. Maybe it would have been a pointer tail if it had had time to grow."

"He ain't no pointer," the Taylor boy insisted. "He's a fiste. He can't hunt birds. I bet he's gun shy, anyway."

"What's gun shy?" asked Margie.

"Afraid of a gun."

"He isn't afraid of anything," Margie declared. "He's brave as he can be. He's a lovely dog."

George, too, had faith in Fred's valor.

He had no gun to test him with, but Margie suggested a fire-cracker. They took Fred into the Budds' kitchen, where a fire-cracker could not set anything on fire, and Margie held him while George fired off the cracker. Mrs. Budd was a careful housekeeper, who kept the kitchen screen door on all winter. Fred Douglas hurled

himself through the rusted wire netting and ran.

"He is gun shy," said George. "I bet there ain't a bit of pointer in him."

"I don't care if there isn't," said Margie, almost in tears. "He's just as much dog. He's all dog, anyway. He's a splendid barker, and you've heard him sing when Cousin Cyrus played the clarionet. If you don't like him I'll give him to Cousin Cyrus. He thinks he's a lovely dog. He said he was a hit-or-miss dog."

"I want him," said George. "He's a watch dog, that's what he is. Pointers ain't any good for that."

"Are you going to tell Will Taylor he's gun shy?"

"No," said George, stoutly. "I bet Will Taylor never had a dog that could jump plumb through a screen door. He's a trick dog. But I won't tell if you don't want me to. I'll say he ain't afraid of anything."

"That would be a story, though."

"Oh, that's all right," said George. "If you say to yourself 'Over the left,' when you tell a story, it makes it all right."

And Fred Douglas was indeed a watch dog. When Margie came to George's house to say good-bye, on almost her last day in Gordonsville, George and Fred walked down to Cousin Betty's

with her. As they turned the first corner they saw a drove of cows coming up Main street.

"Are you afraid of cows?" George asked.

"I wouldn't be if I didn't have red on," said Margie. "If I had a blue hat I wouldn't mind them 'very much.' "

"Girls are always afraid," said George. "Well, I can't go any farther; my mother wants me."

And turning abruptly, George climbed a fence and disappeared. Margie snatched off her hat and hid it under her cloak, trembling with fear. Then Fred Douglas, entirely of his own accord, ran barking at the cows and drove them to the other side of the way. George reappeared a little later. He had remembered that his mother did not want him, after all, and he could go all the way to Cousin Betty's and see that nothing happened to Margie.

The last week the Carlins stayed at Cousin Betty's. Margie was not in school then, and it seemed so strange to walk by the school. It was like playing hookey, only that it was right. So many people came to see mother at Cousin Betty's. Sometimes mother looked as if she had been crying when they went away. Father was already in Dakota, and when he wrote that he had found a house, Mrs. Carlin decided to start at once.

Ever so many people came to the station to see

them off. Margie was wearing her best cloak and hat. She had her paint-box and some paper in a box under her arm, and she meant to draw pictures of the things she saw to send to Lena Bean. It is always delightful and thrilling and scary to be waiting for a train. Your heart jumps clear up into your throat when you hear the whistle. You run into the waiting-room to tell mother, and everybody hurries out, and talks fast, and counts the bundles and bags, and says good-bye, and kisses everybody else and says good-bye again, and to be sure to write as soon as you get there and then—you are on the train.

Margie leaned out the window, to wave good-bye to Lena Bean. George Budd came up just then, with Fred Douglas barking behind him.

“Good-bye, Fred,” called Margie. Fred Douglas ran along the platform, jumping up toward the window, writhing and twisting, and barking and begging to come, too. The train began to move faster. Fred Douglas ran beside it, off the platform and along the track, yelping and wailing. Little by little he dropped behind. Once he gained a little. Then the train crossed a culvert. It was too wide for him to jump. Margie saw him, just a little speck, far back, sitting there looking after her. She put her face down close to the window, drew her arm up over it, and cried. Only five minutes ago she could have patted Fred Douglas, and now—he was

sitting there all alone looking after her. She was going to Dakota to live always.

The Carlins broke their journey by stopping at Springfield and at Chicago to visit their kins-folk, but from Chicago on they stopped only to change cars in St. Paul. That was early one morning, and Margie was eager to travel by day, because at night, even if you sleep next the window, you can see very little. Beyond St. Paul, perhaps, there would be Indians and forests and high hills, because this was far, far out West. It was a very long day. It was late in March, but up there in Minnesota it looked like mid-winter. You could see drifts that looked as high as the train. The country grew flatter. There were no hedges, no fences, no trees. The towns were very far apart, and there seemed to be no farm-houses, unless you could call those little shanties here and there farm-houses. It all looked cold and big and desolate. It would be very different when one came to Dakota, where Adams City and the boom were. There was a street car in Adams City. Margie had seen a picture of it. How far it seemed across those bare, snow-covered prairies! There was still nothing but prairie and snow as far as you could see, when they lighted the lamps in the car. It always gives you a strange feeling in the center of you to look out at the snow when it is growing dark. You cannot explain what the

feeling is, but it is not exactly happy, nor yet unhappy. It seemed very late at night when Mrs. Carlin began to gather her parcels and bags together. She took down Margie's hat and cloak and helped her put them on, and Betty put on her things. The train stopped a little while at a station where there were electric lights. Then it hurried across a bridge, and there were more electric lights and houses. They were all ready to step out now. The train went slower, and stopped. The man on the platform was father, but he didn't look quite as father used to look. It was dark and cold, and everybody was talking at once. Margie drew a deep breath. This was Dakota at last.

CHAPTER V.

CITIZEN OF THE SCHOOL WORLD.

MR. CARLIN had written his wife that they were to live in Edwards' Terrace. Edwards' Terrace suggested to Margie beautiful houses rising in tiers on the side of a hill, and she had longed to live on a hill. In Gordonsville, things were not fancifully named, except the Duplex Drug Store and Mr. Smart's butcher wagon. The wagon had "The Bella Golden" painted on it, in honor of the lady whom Mr. Smart had seen in "The Danites," when the troupe played on the stage set up in the court-room. In Gordonsville you lived out near the college, or near the Square, or over toward the graveyard. Gordonsville was only a town. Adams City was a city. It had water-works and a street car.

The Carlins went to Edwards' Terrace the next morning after their arrival. There was no hill. The Terrace was merely thirty or forty houses set down in rows on the prairie and built after two patterns. The smaller houses were a story and a half high, with roofs slanting sharply toward the street. At the back the roofs sloped in the same way and went off at a less

abrupt angle over the kitchens. Margie thought a house like this looked like a lady with her hat down over her eyes, and her hair flowing out in a waterfall behind. Houses always had expressions to her, but she had learned that you cannot make other people see that one house wears bangs and another parts its hair in the middle, any more than you can show them where to find the faces of men and animals you see on wall paper. The Carlins' house was one of the kind with parted hair. The two windows in the upper story were eyes. The roof of the little gallery below them formed a lip, and two windows below were fangs. Margie tried to explain this to Betty, but Betty couldn't see it.

"I like the house," Betty said, "but I don't see why father didn't take a smaller one with city water in it. Just like a man!"

Margie disliked hearing her father spoken of in that way. It would never have occurred to her to criticise anything he did. He was an aloof personality, but absolutely wise. He belonged to the world of grown people, and even among them he was a superior. He was to be obeyed when he spoke, but it was never necessary to ask his permission for anything. Mrs. Carlin never said, "I'll see what your father says." "I'll tell your father" was an unheard-of threat in the family. Except on Sundays, father was always at the office. He never spoke

unless he was obliged to, and he never scolded. On rare occasions he would take Margie by the hand and march up and down the sitting-room, chanting:

“We'll awake the fiends that sleep below,
We'll awake the fiends that sleep below.”

It was all he remembered of an old Dartmouth College song, and he had no idea of a tune. This was the nearest approach to intimacy with his children. Margie was immensely proud of him. He was an editor, and he knew everything.

Betty seemed suddenly more her senior than the five years' difference in their ages warranted.

“We had a pump at home,” Margie said.

It had been a lovely pump, too, one of the kind Mr. Waggoner put up. It was painted white and smoke-blackened in such a way that it was a dapple gray.

“We'll have to buy water here,” said Betty, wise in her mother's confidence.

And buy water they did. At first, while the cold still held, they bought it by the cord. The clear, green blocks of ice were piled up in the yard, and Helga Olson, the maid servant, chopped them into small pieces with an ax and melted them in the tank on the back of the stove. In warmer weather the water wagons came twice

a week, and a barrel of water cost twenty-five cents. The water of wells, even there, so near the Red River, was not fit for human beings to drink. While the cold held, too, their house was banked almost to the sills of the first-story windows, with earth, held up by stakes and boards, and outside each window was a storm window, with immovable panes, and a little oval shutter at the bottom to open for ventilation. Over the front door was built the unpainted storm shed. These were things Margie had never seen before.

For the first week, they were busy getting settled. Then Margie started to school. Miss Susy Halway, the teacher, called for her early one morning. Miss Susy came from Gordonsville, and she had a cousin who had married mother's cousin. It was pleasant to start in at a new school with a teacher one knew.

"There's the school-house, Margaret," said Miss Susy, as they turned the corner.

Margie looked up the street eagerly. Everything had been so strange to her in the few days since she had come to live in Dakota that she was glad to be on her way to something familiar. The school-house at home, down in Illinois, was red brick and three stories high. It was old, too, for Miss Susy had gone to school there when she was a little girl. Miss Susy must be almost as old now as Cousin Cyrus, and Cousin Cyrus

had gray hair. Surely, all school-houses must be made after somewhat the same fashion.

"It is the large building?" she asked hopefully. That was nearly as large as the school-house at home, and if it had been painted red, instead of a dingy brown, one could have pretended that it was brick.

"No," said Miss Susy, "that's the court-house."

Margie's heart sank. The only other building in sight that could possibly be large enough for a school-house looked as if it had begun to be a store, and then decided to be a ware-house. It was of wood, unpainted, and so narrow that its upper story made it seem top-heavy and insecure.

"Is that the school-house?" Margie asked, with disappointment.

"Yes," said Miss Susy, "that's it. There'll be a better one next year, but when the boom came the town grew so fast that we couldn't wait to build a real school-house. We had to take this."

Margie walked on in silence. It was so unlike one's ideas of going to a new school. How could she tell the girls down home about it when she wrote those promised letters? Adams City was so much larger than the old home, too. Father said it had a population of ten thousand, and was certain to be as large as St. Paul in ten

years. Father was an editor and knew all about such things. But how could a town be wonderful when the school-house was like that? A town with only new planted trees and a brown wooden court-house?

"Our door is down this way," said Miss Susy.

It was exactly like the back door of a store, and inside, narrow stairs led up to the hall above. Margie hung her cloak and hood on a hook in the entry, and then Miss Susy showed her to a seat. The desk, even, was not like the one at home. It had a top that could be raised and lowered, and the ink-well was different. The only thing familiar about the room was the big sheet-iron stove. The walls and ceiling of the room were covered with heavy paper, grained to imitate oak, and there was only one window.

Margie sat desolate and homesick while Miss Susy wrote the words of a song on the black-board—which wasn't a board at all, or even plaster, but merely black paper—and presently the boys and girls began to come in. They took their seats, and Miss Susy tapped a bell. There was not even a bell on the school-house, and without a big bell how could one tell whether one was tardy or not?

At the tap of the call bell the boys and girls rose and marched into the next room. Margie went with Miss Susy. It was a larger room than Miss Susy's, and the boys and girls in it were

older. They all sat with folded arms, and Miss Susy's pupils took seats on the front benches. Then Miss Susy went to the organ, and the man teacher told everybody to stand up to sing.

The song was "The Star-Spangled Banner." Margie joined in timidly at first. The familiar words had a home-like sound. Dakota seemed more like Illinois when the same songs were sung in both places. She began to have a friendly feeling for the boys and girls, and wished she knew them. But how could one get acquainted? Down home everybody knew everybody else, and after the First Reader class, which she had passed through years ago, there were no new girls to meet.

She took her seat again, and listened while Miss Susy called the roll. Almost at the end was Margaret Carlin.

Margie hesitated for a moment. Down home she had always answered "Present," but all these Dakota boys and girls said "Here." "Here" sounded so abrupt and rude, but she wanted to do what was proper in Dakota.

"Here, Miss Susy," she answered.

The boy in front snickered. The girl across the aisle stared. What was wrong in saying "Miss Susy"? Didn't everybody down home call her Miss Susy before she went away to Dakota? Miss Susy saw her look of distress.

"You may call me Miss Halway," she said. "And it will be sufficient to answer 'Here.' Margaret Carlin," she added to the school, "comes from my old home."

The friendliness of her smile relieved Margie's embarrassment. Still it was hard to be stared at, and harder still to be a stranger among all these girls. She sat with eyes downcast, while the B class was called out to recite. Miss Susy had told her she would belong to the A class. The B class was reading.

"The Worm of the Still" was the name of the piece. Margie had read it herself the year before, but she had no idea what it meant. It always troubled her, for it seemed to be about a terrible worm that gnawed the still, and father was such a still man. She began to worry over it again when somebody two aisles away said:

"Ahem!"

It wasn't a natural noise. It was the sort of noise the girls at home made when they wanted to attract one's attention. Margie looked across to the girl who made it. She was a brown-eyed girl of about Margie's own age, eleven, and she wore her hair as Margie did, in curls. The lid of her desk was up, and behind it, screened from Miss Susy's eyes, the little girl was going through curious motions with her hands. Margie recognized that she was talking on her fingers, but "i" was the only letter she could

make out. The little girl pointed to her eye for that. Margie shook her head. The little girl put down the lid of her desk and began to write something on a slip of paper. Margie hoped she wasn't writing a note. Down home it was considered worse to write notes than even to whisper. Margie turned her eyes to her lap again, determined to take no part in the proceedings. She was not above whispering or even writing notes before a mere teacher, but Miss Susy was more than that. She was an old friend of Cousin Cyrus, and a third cousin to Cousin Lucy, his wife.

The B class was dismissed, and when the girl who sat between her and the curly-haired girl dropped into her seat, she leaned over and dropped a wad of paper into Margie's lap. Margie looked up to see the curly-haired girl nodding and pointing. She opened the note.

"Will you play 'Pom-pom, pull-away' at recess? Your true friend," it read. The name signed to it looked like Jane Megan.

Margie sent back a nod of consent. She had never heard of "Pom-pom, pull-away" before, but it would be lovely to play something. The two weeks since she left home had seemed too long with nobody to play with. There were girls in Edwards' Terrace, but she knew no way to make their acquaintance. She felt at once that she was going to like Jane Megan.

Jane caught her hand as they went down the stairs at recess.

"Your name's Margaret, isn't it?" she said.
"Aren't you ever called Madge?"

"Sometimes," said Margaret. "But mostly they call me Margie. And aren't you called Jennie? I have a friend down home named Jane, and we call her Jinks."

"Oh, but my name isn't Jane," said her new friend. "It's Ione. People mostly think it's Jane when it's written, but it isn't. I came from Duluth. Where'd you come from?"

"I came from Gordonsville, down in Illinois," said Margaret. "We've just come."

"Is your father the Mr. Carlin that's bought the *News*?" asked Ione.

"Yes. My father's an editor," said Margie.
"I've seen him," said Ione. "He looked nice."
"He is nice. What is your father?" Margie asked.

"He keeps a liv'ry stable," said Ione.
"That's lovely!" said Margie. "It must be 'most as nice as keeping a candy store."

"My father does that," remarked another little girl who had approached them. "My name's Lizzie Viola Elwood. My father makes ice-cream, too."

"Now, you look out, you stuck-up," said Ione.
"We're going to play 'Pom-pom, pull-away.' If you brag about your father's ice-cream, you can't

play. I guess my mother can make ice-cream, too."

Lizzie seemed to be about to resent the speech, when Margie broke in hastily.

"I don't know how to play it," she said.

"We'll show you," cried the two girls. "Wait till I get some more girls," said Lizzie.

"Just you count out," said Ione. "Do you know how to do that?"

"Oh, yes," said Margie, "I know lots of counting out things. The one we say most is:

"Onery, twoery ickery An,
Fileson, foleson, Nicholas John
Quevy, quavy, English navy,
Stinkleum, stankleum buck."

"Do you know 'Eeny, meeny, miny mo?'" asked Ione.

"Yes," said Margie, delighted. Dakota girls were just like the girls down home.

"Well, then, you count out, you and me and Lizzie and Marie and Janet. We won't want any of the other girls to be it. Hurry up before they come."

Margie counted out:

"Eeny, meeny, miny mo,
Cracky feeny finey fo,
Upaloocha, popaloocha,
Rick, bick, bang go."

"You're 'it,'" she said to Lizzie.

Lizzie ran out into the street, and all the other girls stood in a line.

"Pom-pom, pull-away," shouted Lizzie.
"Come or I'll fetch you away."

The girls instantly ran to the other side of the street, Lizzie catching at them frantically. Marie was the only one on whom she retained her hold, so she and Marie were "it" together.

"Why," said Margie, as she and Ione walked into the school again, warned by the call bell and Miss Susy at the window that recess was over, "that's just the way we play 'Fox and Geese' down home. The girl that's 'it' says: 'How many geese have you got?' and we say: 'More than you can catch,' and then we run. It's just the same."

"And do you play 'Duck on a Rock' and 'Prisoner's Base' and 'Oats, Beans, Peas' and 'King William'?"

"Yes," said Margie, delighted, "and 'Town Ball' and 'Here Goes the Blackbird' and 'Chickamy, Chickamy, Craney-crow.'"

"Then I guess it isn't much different down in Illinois from what it is in Duluth," said Ione.

"I don't know about Duluth, but it's lots different from Dakota. We have trees and hills."

"Trees with fruit on them?" asked Ione.

"Lots of them," said Margie. "We used to

have early Junes, and Rambos, and green gages, and quinces, and cherries, and heaps of others."

"Peaches?" asked Ione.

"Yes."

Ione drew nearer and spoke lower. They were entering the room now.

"Don't tell Lizzie I asked you," she said. "She came from Michigan and she brags, but I wish you'd tell me if peaches grow on a vine or a tree. I never saw any growing."

"They grow on a tree," said Margie. "It has bitter leaves, but sometimes you find gum on the tree."

"Gum?" asked Ione. "Good to eat?"

Margie nodded.

"Well," said Ione, "I guess I'll just tell Lizzie that. She said they grew on trees, but I bet she don't know about the leaves being bitter. I'll tell her something, and I guess she'll wish she hadn't laughed when I said I knew they grew on a vine."

CHAPTER VI.

MEN WERE DECEIVERS EVER.

WHEN Margie went to Dakota she was still playing with dolls, though Lena Bean's mother had remarked to Mrs. Carlin the year before that dolls ought to be forbidden her. She outgrew Belinda Betts and the wax dolls and passed to the enjoyment of the less material beauties of paper dolls—whole families of them, cut out of *Godey's* and *Demorest's*, and inscribed on the back with splendid names. There were two hundred paper dolls in her box in Edwards' Terrace when she first met Ione Megan, and it was in her mind to divide them with her new friend. Ione was twelve, and the pretty blue frock she wore to school was made precisely like the dress on Lily Bell Vane, who was one of the nine little girls in the Vane family of dolls. Ione wore a ring, too, that was wished on, and a string of gold beads.

“I have a paper doll with a dress on it like yours,” said Margie one day to Ione, early in their acquaintance.

"My land!" said Ione, "do you play with dolls yet?"

"No, but—I used to," said Margie. "Of course, I don't now."

She was very glad she had not asked Ione to share the paper dolls. It would be unpleasant to appear babyish when one really wasn't. In the Grammar School one was a big girl, and in the Grammar School that year one studied botany. It was a primer, but it was a most difficult book to learn things from. The only really familiar thing in it was the word "Preface," and, of course, one knew what preface stood for. Down in No. 5 one could chant:

"Peter Rice Eats Fishes, Alligators Catch Eels,"

and, beginning at the other end:

"Eels Catch Alligators, Father Eats Rotten Potatoes."

The class had learned twelve pages of the botany primer before Margie entered it, and she had those twelve pages to make up before she could start on from the statement: "It is supposed that the chlorophyll separates the carbon from carbonic acid taken from the air, gives back the oxygen to the air and supplies the carbon

(which at the same time combines with the oxygen and hydrogen of water to form starch) to the plant."

Even that was nothing at all to what the botany primer could do when it tried. It was merely an experiment in the Adams City Grammar School when Adams City itself was in the experimental stage. It was soon discarded as beyond the comprehension of any but High School boys and girls, and it left in Margie's mind only a few large words and one important fact about violets. She made use of her knowledge in a letter to Lena Bean, and she hoped Lena would be impressed.

"There are a great many kinds of flowers here that we didn't use to could find in Gordonsville. There are four kinds of violets. White purple and yellow down near the river where there are trees, and another pale purple kind which grows out back of our house on the prairie. The dehiscent fruit of the violet is produced from the superior ovary and has three carpels, but the violet that grows out back of our house has leaves most like dutch man's breeches leaves. You would be pleased to see the new flowers which you do not see in Gordonsville."

Margie herself was immensely pleased to see them—all of them but the blood root. Johnny Halderman, who lived next door in Edwards' Terrace, and went to find flowers with her, told

her a story about a mandrake, and they agreed that the blood root must be something of the kind. It bled so realistically when you cut its roots. Johnny was a gentle, dreamy boy who knew the river woods and where to find every flower that grew. He shared Margie's pleasure in the first crocus they found along the railway track. He said it made him shiver to think of flowers coming out in the cold, and the crocus, they thought, looked so comfortable in its furs. He brought her the first paint root, which presently flamed out in orange patches all over the prairie. He found her the tiny white blossom he called the star flower, and the stumpy vines that looked like slips of the indigo bush at home, and Jack-in-the-pulpits, and columbines and lady-slippers. Margie liked even the silver plush sage, and the weariness of learning about flowers from a book that muddled one's mind did not keep her from beginning to love the wonderful prairie flowers and the prairie they grew on. Johnny did not go to school, but recited his lessons to the rector, who was his uncle.

His friendship for Margie, therefore, was not exposed to the curious eyes of the other girls, and Margie liked him the better because of that. In Gordonsville she had always had one bosom friend, and one only. She and Lena Bean had lived in a little world of their own. In Adams City she had simply friends. It was the

custom there to be gregarious. All of those in her class were older than herself, and they played "Pull-away" only half-heartedly. They were beginning to feel themselves almost grown: Flo Hewitt wore stays, and Ethel Ellis came to school in a sealskin sacque. At recess they walked in groups of threes and fours, and they talked—to Margie's amazement, they talked about boys.

"What boy do you like best?" Flo Hewitt asked her one day.

Margie admired the largest boy in the school, but in a far-off and impersonal way. He seemed to her brave and handsome, like a prince in a fairy story. She had not the slightest wish to know him, and she would not for worlds have admitted her admiration.

"I don't like any boy," she said.

"Didn't you ever have a fellow?" Flo asked.

Margie felt her ears grow hot. Nobody had ever taught her that it was not quite nice of Flo to talk that way, and she could not define her embarrassment, but it was somewhat the feeling she had when she dreamed of finding herself in church in her nightgown. She shook her head.

"My!" said Flo. "*You're* queer. Why, every girl has a fellow. Butler Bryan is mine, and Dave Harper is Ione's, and Bert Holman is Ethel's——" and she went on pairing off everybody in the Grammar School.

"What does a boy do that's your fellow?" Margie asked, shamefacedly.

"Oh, write notes in school, and choose you in games, and take you to parties, and kiss you, and be sweet on you. You'll get one after a while."

This struck terror to Margie. She remembered how the boys at home hooted when they say a boy walking with a girl. It would be dreadful to be hooted at, and it would be quite as dreadful to feel that you ought to be hooted at, even if you heard no hoots. And to be kissed by a boy—standing on the floor would make one feel far less uncomfortable and unable to look people in the face. She could not understand wanting to kiss anybody. You kissed father and mother, of course, because you had always done it, but mother didn't make you kiss anybody else. When ladies insisted, you could always turn your cheek. A great part of the shyness which had always been attributed to Margie was due to her fear of being kissed by grown people, and the whole of it was at all times due to a dread of being ridiculous. In the matter of being freed from undesired caresses, she had declared herself at a very early age. One of father's old friends had begged her to sit on his knee.

"I will if mother will," had been her answer.

It was absolutely unthinkable, the idea of being kissed by a boy, and the openness with which the girls referred to their boy admirers

was amazing to her. She did not say to herself that it was not nice, nor that it was silly. She could not define her feeling. She was quite content to let the girls have fellows if they chose, but she wanted none herself. She admired Flo and Ione. They seemed so sure of themselves, and so beautifully unembarrassed, but she had no wish to emulate them.

In Rome, however, it is necessary to conform more or less to Roman customs. Between twelve and thirteen Margie joined the vast army of her sisters who trust in men, only to find their trust betrayed. In every village and town in the country just then there was a roller skating rink. No other amusement has ever been so mad a craze. The Adams City rink was open every evening in the week, and on Saturday afternoons. Margie had never been there in the evening, and only a few times in the afternoon. She owned a pair of skates which old Major Winchester had sent her, but admission to the rink cost money, and Margie knew that mother had not much money to spare. Besides, mother did not like to have her go alone, and none of the girls she knew lived near her. One day she heard the girls talking of a Saturday party at the rink. The Grammar School boys were getting it up, and they were to take the girls. The thought of being asked to go did not enter Margie's mind. She had never been to any sort of

a party with anyone but John Halderman or her father as escort. She did not mind hearing the girls talk of it, for going to rink parties was only a part of their pairing-off custom. It was not until Flo Hewitt ~~said~~ said, "Ed Harlan's going to ask you," that the party became a matter of personal interest to her. Ed Harland had always seemed to her a pleasant enough boy. She had paid little attention to him, but she knew that none of the girls claimed him. He was not in the slightest degree sentimental, and one could go with him without feeling silly. She hoped very much that he would ask her, and yet it seemed unlikely. Nobody ever had asked her—but then she had never wanted to be asked before. After school that day, Ed came up to her as she was talking to Flo and Ione at the corner.

"Will you go to the rink with me Saturday?" he asked, bluntly.

"I will if I can," Margie answered, trying to appear not too eager. "I'll have to ask my mother, but I'm almost sure I can get to go. I'll let you know to-morrow."

"All right," said Ed, turning away awkwardly.

Margie went home light-footed. It seemed too lovely to be asked to go—to join the other girls without having any boy you had to like best. She burst in on her mother all aglow with

delight, and Mrs. Carlin required little persuading.

"Well," she said, "since all the other girls are going, and it's just the school boys and girls together, I can't see any reason for your staying away. Of course you may go."

Going meant wearing for the first time the new cashmere dress, and new dresses were rarer now than they used to be. There was only a little more sewing to be done on it—no more than Mrs. Carlin could easily do in the whole day that intervened between this Thursday and the wonderful Saturday. She brought out the dress at once. Even Betty, who was a young lady now, seemed to approve Margie's going, though she was severe on boys and girls, as a rule. All father said when he heard it, was:

"My stars! but we're putting on airs."

You see, it is a great event to go to a rink party. It isn't at all the same thing as going with another girl on an ordinary Saturday. A rink party meant music, and Margie had never skated to music. She knew she could do it, for she skated better than most girls. Not even Ione could do the Dutch roll so well. She oiled and cleaned her skates, and decided to write to Lena Bean and tell her all about it. She told John Halderman, and then she was sorry she had spoken. John was not strong enough to skate, and she thought he looked wistful. It

must be so dreadful not to be able to skate when everybody else did. She whistled, or hissed rather, a tune through her teeth as she walked to school next morning. At one corner she met Ione.

“I’m going,” she said.

“I’m awfully glad,” said Ione. “We’ll have a gorgeous time.”

They met Flo at the school-house corner. Flo was glad, too, to hear the news. Ed and Ethel Ellis were standing near the steps as they came up.

“I can go,” called Margie.

Ed looked down, in embarrassment.

“Well, you see,” he said, huskily, “after I asked you I thought I’d rather take Ethel, and she didn’t have to ask her mother, so I’m going to take her.”

Margie went on into the school-house. She was a very long time hanging up her jacket and hat.

“Wasn’t that mean of Ed!” said Ione. “I’m just as sorry——”

The eyes of Flo and Ione flayed Margie.

“I’ve—I’ve forgotten something,” she said. “I’ll have to go home and get it.”

She faced them.

“I don’t care a bit,” she said, taking down her hat and jacket.

The one necessity now was to hide before she

gave way. She hurried along the street holding her mind, as she might have held her breath. Not home, no, mother was there sewing on the new dress. Somewhere alone. She could feel her lips trembling. She began to run. Down across the little bridge over the *coulee* into Island Park, and on and on till the trees shut out all the world.

It was almost dark when Margie started for home. She had prayed God to kill her, and God had not answered. She had sobbed till sheer exhaustion had silenced her. All day long she had fought for a way out of the depths, and she was worn out, not comforted. There seemed no possible way out. She had been humiliated before all her world. The imagined pity of the girls lashed her bare soul. She went over and over the thing, trying for some shred of comfort to cling to. Everybody would have to know. Mother and father and Betty and all the school. Mother, when she could face her, would manage so that father and Betty would not speak of it, but they would all try to make up to her for it. They would feel sorry. And the girls—nothing could keep them from speaking of it. They would say they were sorry, and they would look at her.

She went slowly toward home. If only there were nobody but mother in the world, how much easier living would be. If she and mother could

only go away—back to Gordonsville. Oh, Gordonsville! An ache for home, for the soil she sprang from, filled her. Just to be where nobody knew about Ed. She wished she had said something mean to him. She felt very tired. Perhaps, now that she could think of it without crying, mother would help her to make it seem better. Perhaps mother would not make her go to school again. If she had only slapped Ed. He deserved slapping. If she had only been able to act as if she didn't care. Perhaps she could manage to act that way before Monday—but acting wouldn't help.

She thought of how it would be when she reached home. If mother should be angry with her for staying out all day, it would be a comfort. Perhaps mother would punish her by making her stay away from the rink. That would make it so much easier about father and Betty. Perhaps, then, mother wouldn't have to know—but mother would know. Lights were twinkling in windows here and there. Margie shivered. It was October, and the day had been unusually warm, but the dusk was chilly. Margie walked faster. She had decided now to tell mother. Her misery had dulled itself. She felt hungry and weak. She came along the street at the side of her home, and began to climb the fence. Her foot slipped and she plunged headlong over, flinging out one arm. All her weight

fell on it, and she felt the bone snap. There was a little time before she cried out, and in that time she said to herself:

“I’m glad, I’m glad, I’m glad.”

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN THE WORM TURNED.

AT Margie's age a broken arm is not a matter for any deep regret. Even when you hit it a smart rap as she did, the first day the doctor takes the splint off, and have it wrapped up again for another while, the only real disadvantage about it is that people cut your beefsteak into bits that are either too large or too small; the only real discomfort, the necessity of sleeping all night on the same side. A broken arm is an event and makes you a personage. The girls from school come to see you and look at you with awed imagination. You know that everybody is talking about you, and you enjoy it. You enjoy walking downtown. Everybody stares at your sling, and you act as cool and unconcerned as a hero home from the war. It is a thrilling and romantic situation. You like to tell the girls all about it. When you say that you picked yourself up and walked into the house, they fairly gasp with admiration of your heroism.

“Didn’t it hurt awfully?” Ione asks.

"I didn't mind it," you say, and Ione tells that at school. The biggest boy says, "Golly, she's got grit," and all the other boys begin to brag of the things that happened to them and how they acted. But only Bert Butler has ever had his arm broken, and he was knocked senseless. It becomes a school tradition that you picked yourself up and walked into the house with your arm broken. It is not incumbent on you to explain that it really didn't hurt till somebody touched it. The girls all know that the doctor gave you ether, but they cannot know what a delightful experience ether was. Flo says the idea of it would scare her to death, but it didn't scare you, because you didn't want the arm to hurt when the doctor set it.

It had a choky, throat-burning smell at first, and you shut your eyes. Everything was so still, but you heard the clock ticking. You began to whizz off then—clear off the world, into a place where everything was whizzy. You opened your eyes to say you weren't gone yet, and then you whizzed off and off again. Noises like engines went on about you, and you seemed to be part of the noise. Far, far away, down a wide hall as long as the world, you remembered that a little girl had been hurt. They were setting her arm, but it wasn't your arm, and the little girl wasn't you. You weren't anybody, and it was a delightful sensation to feel that. You

weren't anybody enough to be whizzed. You were a part of the whizz itself. Then you opened your eyes and felt dizzy. There was the doctor just finishing the bandaging. He bent your arm across you and put it into a sling. It seemed as if he were making you a present of it, and you said, feeling very gay:

"Can I have it to keep?"

"She isn't quite awake yet," you heard the doctor say, "but she'll be all right now."

And everybody was so kind and good to you, and it was lovely to have them feel sorry. You were the heroine of the occasion, and a very great occasion it was. You ceased to think of Ed Harlan. He was only a rude little boy, and you wanted to forgive your enemies, anyway. It was so easy to feel that way when you could look down from such a high seat in the synagogue.

Johnny Halderman came over and played cassino with you, and Mrs. Halderman sent you jelly. Father brought you a bag of candy, and mother and Betty waited on you hand and foot. Betty helped you with your lessons, and the girls told you just what they were studying. You didn't want to fall behind, because your class would be promoted at Christmas and go into the new school-house.

You—but it is Margie we are talking of. Betty, who was five years her senior, had been

obliged to give up school because of her eyes. It was a great disappointment for Betty, because she hoped to be a teacher, and in less than a year she would have been ready for college. She was forbidden to read, but Margie could read to her, and Margie liked to do it. Some of the times Margie read to her sister she never quite forgot. There was history, and literature, and geometry. Betty would set down a problem that Margie read out, and when father came home, he looked it over. Margie felt that she was almost studying geometry, too. They tried a little Latin together, and Latin immediately became a wonderful thing to Margie. She begged Betty to teach it to her. Betty thought that Latin could not possibly appeal to her, but she consented to mark in the grammar the things that were to be learned first. It was all so easy —nothing that required thought. Nothing puzzling like arithmetic. Margie learned to chant *stella, stellæ, and puer, pueri, and urbs, urbis*, through all their cases. She learned two tenses of *amo*, and she learned the ablative prepositions. Betty used the English pronunciation, and in that the prepositions fitted in a rhyme:

“A, ab, absque, de,
Sine, tenus, pro and præ,
Coram, cum, ex and e.”

Margie found a practical use for her Latin. When she went back to school she counted out with the prepositions which govern the ablative.

The new school-house, finer by far than the old Gordonsville school, was finished that fall. The Grammar School moved into it at Christmas, and Margie went with them. They sat all together now in one very large room, and the man teacher, whose name was Xerxes Zenophon Hunt, heard classes in arithmetic and spelling there. One sat there, too, to study, going to the assistant teachers in the rooms across the hall for most lessons. Mr. Hunt was a hunchback. He had a violent temper and was a strict disciplinarian, but, in spite of these things, the boys liked him. There was a certain spirit of comradeship between him and them. He aroused their interest in politics, and encouraged them to debate. He liked to be asked questions by them, and would listen readily to any new point of view. The girls were all afraid of him, and Margie lived in terror of his sarcastic tongue. Infractions of his rules he punished with tortures. He made one girl who whispered stand on the floor for an hour, holding a spelling book in her teeth. A boy who threw paper wads endured the agony of sitting on the floor with his feet on the raised platform. Mr. Hunt had no mercy on the dull. If you failed in an arithmetic example, you had to stand on the floor, and he

drew about your feet a circle in chalk so that you could not move without stepping on it. There you stood in one position till you solved the problem. Only once was Margie obliged to stand there. She had misunderstood the length of the lesson and had not studied the example he gave her.

"I didn't study that far," she explained, when he ordered her to solve it at the blackboard.

"Oh, you didn't, eh?" Mr. Hunt snarled.
"Why not?"

"I didn't know it was the lesson."

"Oh, didn't know it was the lesson, didn't know," he said. "And I suppose you think that's an excuse?"

Margie flushed.

"I think I can do it, though," she said.

"Oh, you do, do you?" Mr. Hunt sneered. "You conceive your mathematical attainments to be so lofty that it is unnecessary for you to study. You think you can do it. Well, I don't. Stand on the floor there and study it. Perhaps after this you'll condescend to study the lessons I give out."

Margie walked down the aisle and took her stand. She had always imagined that if she were obliged to stand on the floor she would be so humiliated that she would cry, as some of the girls did. Now she found herself without the slightest symptom of tears. She shook a little,



“I’m still studying it,” she said.

for she had never been so angry before in all her life. Her excuse had been respectfully given and she had a right to expect that it would be accepted. Mr. Hunt might mark her down for it, and he had even the right to make her stand on the floor if she missed, but he had no right to refuse to let her try the example. He had no right, either, to speak as he did. Only very underbred people said insulting things to those who couldn't answer back. Mr. Hunt seemed exactly like the woman down in Gordonsville who had insulted Black Sam. Vulgar was the word Margie called him to herself. Cry? Not if she stood on the floor a thousand years. She broke through the respect she had always had for a teacher, and out of her deep contempt and her anger sprang a cool insolence. At the end of the lesson Mr. Hunt said to her in a somewhat milder manner:

"Do you know the example now?"

She faced him calmly.

"I am still studying it," she said.

"Have you worked it?" he demanded.

"Oh, did you want me to work it? You didn't tell me that," she said. "You told me to study it."

Mr. Hunt wheeled on her furiously.

"You're impudent," he shouted. "Go to your seat, and stay after school."

Margie went to her seat. Her blood was up,

and she fairly yearned for another encounter with Mr. Hunt. The chance for it came within the hour. As she sat over her geography she heard a significant cough from somewhere near, and as she raised her head, a folded note dropped over her shoulder. She did not know who sent it, and she had no chance to read it, for almost the instant her fingers closed on it Mr. Hunt called out from his desk:

“What have you there?” he demanded.

“A note, Mr. Hunt,” said Margie.

“Bring it to me.”

Margie had no idea who had written the note, nor what was in it. It might have come from any one of a half-dozen near her, but Mr. Hunt would identify the writer and then there would be trouble. If there were anything silly in it, he would read it out.

“Bring it here!” shouted Mr. Hunt.

The folded paper was the merest scrap. Margie dipped it deliberately into the open ink-well on her desk, and then carried it to Mr. Hunt. For an instant she thought he meant to strike her, but she had lashed herself into such a fury that she did not care what happened. The muscles in Mr. Hunt’s jaws stood out, but he said nothing. She walked back to her seat and resumed her geography study.

The school filed out at four o’clock and left her there. Mr. Hunt limped to the door and

watched the boys down the stairs. He was chewing a bit of straw, as he always did when he was angry. He came back presently, and closed the door behind him. For a long while he limped up and down the clear space near his desk. Then he beckoned to Margie. She went forward.

"We'll hear your side first," he said.

Margie, taken aback, felt the tears rush to her eyes.

"Oh, Mr. Hunt," she said, "I'm so sorry. I was never bad in school before in all my life, but I didn't think you ought to have spoken the way you did. It wasn't fair."

Mr. Hunt said nothing.

"And the note," she went on, unsteadily, "you would have read it right out."

"It's against the rules to write notes," Mr. Hunt said almost gently.

"I know, but I didn't write it."

"Who did?"

"I don't know."

"Would you tell if you did know?" he asked.

Margie made small pretense of altruism.

"Not unless it was somebody I was mad at," she said.

Mr. Hunt chewed his straw reflectively.

"Are you mad at me?" he asked.

"Not now," she said.

Mr. Hunt did not speak for a little time.

"You may go," he said. Margie looked back at him from the door. How terrible it must be to be deformed like that! Ed Harlan had called him hump-backed to his face once. And mother said he must suffer a great deal. Perhaps he couldn't help being mean at times. If you weren't afraid of him, you would be sorry for him.

"Good-bye, Mr. Hunt," she called out, with a friendly nod.

"Good-bye, my little friend," he answered.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WEAKNESS OF GOLD.

DAKOTA was not long in teaching Margie what an important factor money is in the world. In Gordonsville, rich and poor were words she associated with city people in stories. They had no bearing on life as she knew it. The Carlins had always lived simply, and Margie had no wishes unfulfilled because of a lack of money. She was fond of pretty frocks, and nothing she wore ever seemed to her in any way open to criticism. Her attention had never been called to the matter of dress by the consciousness of being better dressed than other girls or not so well dressed as they were. Mrs. Carlin never spoke of the cost of anything before her. She knew that when her mother went shopping she carried no purse. The shopkeepers were told merely to charge this or that to W. M. Carlin. And Freda Wagenhals came to help mother sew.

When shoes and frocks wore out, mother bought others. One was never told to be careful of one's dress. There was never any lack of

anything, so far as Margie knew. Home was not so large a house as many another in the neighborhood, but it had never occurred to her to think about that. It was a place to which everybody came. Mother could tell such delightful stories. Every Friday evening in the winter there was a "gathering." The boys and girls in the neighborhood liked to come to hear mother's stories, or to play games. There were nuts and popcorn and apples, and if anyone went to the cellar after them, in the midst of a story, mother wouldn't tell another word till he came back. Then, there were a great many people, too, who came to visit. Sometimes mother had whist parties, and very often she put on a lovely gray silk gown and went to musicales, or to the Hunters' Ball at the hotel. Major Winchester drove very beautiful horses, but they suggested to Margie no contrast with Old Sam and the spring wagon in which the Carlins went everywhere. Nobody had more books and magazines than father, and you could read any of them you chose. Margie had never been forbidden to read but one book. That was "Lena Rivers." She read it up in the hayloft, and could not understand why mother objected to it. It was not half so interesting as "Henry Esmond," though in Esmond, as in all other grown-up books, there was a great deal you had to skip because it was dull. Books, Margie understood

to be essential things. Editors always had them, just as editors always had tickets to the circus and to the Swiss Bell Ringers and to the fair. Editors could ride on railroads, too. Mother often went to St. Louis, and Margie herself had been to Chicago twice before she was ten. In Gordonsville, too, one was always in things. When the ladies got up any entertainment for the benefit of the library, or for the church, it was a matter of course that one would be in it. None of these things had to do with money. Margie had never possessed more than a dollar at a time in her life. That was at Christmas, and you could buy a great deal with it. At Fourth of July you had two bits. This bought two bunches of fire-crackers and a bag of torpedoes, and, fired one at a time, these lasted all morning. In the afternoon there was a picnic. Margie had never had spending money as a regular thing. Five cents now and then, you could have if you asked father. She did not like soda water nor chewing gum, and she had no very great fondness for candy. Her wants did not require money.

She was conscious of degrees of social importance, but these, again, did not depend on money. Belonging to a first family meant to her having a great-grandfather who had been one of the first settlers. Good blood and family were familiar terms to her, and it was a matter of

course with her that everybody in Gordonsville who mattered at all was kin to her. Belonging to a family meant, beside having a great many people you called "cousin," the possession of certain traits. Mrs. Carlin was a Gordon. There was the Gordon temper, and the Gordon manner. Mother believed in self-control, but when anything vexed Cousin Cyrus, he ripped and tore. At other times, he had the Gordon manner, which was, indeed, charming. Families all came in the first place from Kentucky. Kentuckians were entirely different from Yankees. It was an astonishment to Margie to learn that father had once been a Yankee, and Grandmother Carlin stamped in Margie's mind the type of all Yankees. They did not have pleasant, easy manners like the Gordons, but Grandmother had an idea of family, too. Her idea didn't excuse you for ripping and tearing, as being a Gordon did. It made you remember what things a gentlewoman might do, and what she might not do. Gentlewomen, Grandmother Carlin said, never allowed their emotions to master them. Gentlewomen never betrayed enjoyment of what they ate.

Yankees, to Margie, were not at all comfortable people. Grandmother had stiff chairs which had belonged to her great-grandfather, who had been President of Harvard. Only Yankees could be comfortable in them.

Grandmother could be entertaining when she chose to tell about the dinner party her mother gave to Lafayette, or about dining with President Madison, who ate with a silver fork, which Mrs. Madison said was an odd habit he had acquired in Paris. Most times Grandmother was not pleasant. You could not sit in her presence unless she gave you permission, and it would never have occurred to you to kiss her. She used odd words, too. She called a bucket a pail, and a skillet a spider, and a bit a shilling, and had a horror of slang. She was uncomfortable about Sundays, too, and when she prayed she spoke of herself as chiefest among sinners, and you wondered what frightful thing she had done, till you asked mother, and mother said it was just an expression. Visits to Grandmother were not pleasant, but visits to the Gordon kin were delightful. Margie admired her family very much. Mother and Cousin Betty seemed to her the most elegant ladies in town. They sailed along so impressively when they walked, and gentlemen bowed so low to them. They laughed so fascinatingly, and held their hands so daintily. They were not just women like Lena Bean's mother and Mrs. Taylor. They were Gordons. Margie knew that there had never been a Gordon man whose courage had been questioned, and it was not safe to doubt a Gordon's word. Whatever of romance she

understood was bound up in her idea of her family. They were all persons of importance, and just what this meant she did not realize till Dakota taught her.

There were no families in Dakota. Nobody had kin out there, and one heard a great deal said of money. Ethel Ellis's father was rich. She lived in a large house in what Ione said was the fashionable street, and she wore a great deal of jewelry. Most of the girls wore more than Margie did. It was not long before she began to feel that they were better dressed. Ione had such pretty frocks. For the first time in her life Margie was envious. For the first time, too, she came to know that mother could not buy her frocks like Ione's. Mr. Carlin's business venture was not a success. Margie was conscious of a growing sense of discomfort. Home was a pleasant place, but wearing one's shoes out was a serious matter. Mother looked distressed about it, and sometimes the shoes were very shabby, indeed, before one had another pair. Mother never went anywhere now. Her gray silk had been made over for Betty to wear to a party. The old feeling of plenty was gone. Money was never discussed before Margie, but she felt the lack of it. The other girls had so many more Christmas presents to tell about. They wore wider hair ribbons, and they were in more things. At thirteen these things cut deep.

Margie learned to shut her eyes to things, and to keep silent. To speak to mother of the frocks she wanted made doing without them seem so much more dreadful. It was pleasanter to say nothing, and to dream day-dreams of the time when she could have prettier frocks than Ione, and ever so many pairs of shoes, without any patches.

At this time she had no bosom friend. It was impossible to have a real chum when you had to pretend so much—evade so much. It hurt her to hear Betty speak of their poverty. Margie would not admit it to herself. She could not look things in the face as Betty did. Betty was uncompromisingly truthful, and Margie was a dreamer. Mother, too, skimmed over things. There was one dreadful time when Margie had but one suit of underflannels. They were always freshly laundered when she woke on Sunday morning. Mother had washed and dried them over night, but Margie would not speak of this, nor think of it. It seemed a thing one must conceal. It was entirely out of keeping with the pleasant dinner-table, where there was always something very good to eat, and a flower or a growing plant in the center of the table. Poverty meant having not enough to eat. It meant an untidy-looking mother and discussions about money. One suit of underflannels was a different thing. It was merely an accident, like other un-

pleasant things one ignored. And if one was not in many things, that was an accident, too. The few people mother did know were all interesting, and mother still had the Gordon manner.

The winter Margie was thirteen was the hardest in all the Carlins' experience. The boom had gone, and unfortunate investments had swallowed up all Mr. Carlin possessed. It was a bitterly cold winter. More than once the water froze on Margie's curls on the way to school. Twice her ears were frozen. Forty and fifty degrees below zero were not uncommon that year. Margie wore her light jacket far into the winter. Her heavy cloak she had worn the winter before, and even then it had been an old one of Betty's. It was so worn and shabby that Margie pretended she did not need it. She kept on dreaming that something would happen so that she could have an ulster like Ione's. Ione had everything. Margie's prayer was always: "Oh God, please let things be better. Please let things be better." There came a day when the light jacket was no longer warm enough.

"You must wear your heavy cloak to-day, honey," her mother said.

"Oh, mother, it does look so shabby," said Margie.

Mrs. Carlin put her arms about her.

"I know," she said; "I know, but I can't get you anything else just now."

Her voice broke a little. The horror Margie had learned to dread, the open acknowledgment of poverty, was very near. Margie put on the old cloak. With her knitted scarf tied about her neck, so that the ends dangled in front over the worn buttonholes, it did not look quite so shabby. And it was warm. Perhaps, anyway, something would happen so she need not wear it all winter. Her hook in the cloak-room was in the far corner, too, and that helped. Nobody would be likely to notice the cloak, and she could always put the scarf on before she came out of the cloak-room. "Wha's there for honest poverty that hangs his head and a' that," had never comforted her. A man might be a man for a' that, but a girl can't be a girl if she has to be the shabbiest of her set. It would be different if one were a Norwegian like the two little Olsen girls. They had never had pretty clothes, and they did not mind wearing a dress that was too short to parties, because they never went to parties.

Margie had been to Ethel Ellis's party, which was the most elaborate Adams City had ever seen. Nothing in the world but lack of money kept her from being a leader among the girls, and she knew it. But she could not be at her best in a shabby dress. She had read about girls in books who didn't feel as she did, but in books things always turned out well in the end, and she did not see any end in her case. If one was not

born an Olsen, one must have money. Everybody of one's kind did have it. The things she wanted were never better than Ione's. They were simply like Ione's. She had visited Ione a few times, and she felt that Ione's mother was not quite a gentlewoman. She was more like Mrs. Taylor down home, and she said "I seen," but she was a very pleasant, lovable woman. Margie had never seen Ione's father. The day of the old cloak was Ione's birthday, and she was wearing a new watch. Margie did not envy her this especially. She was too glad to find that neither Ione nor Flo Hewitt seemed to notice the old cloak, to think of anything else. In school, anyway, being head of the class and never scolded by Mr. Hunt, made up for a great deal.

This day Mr. Hunt had something new for them all to do. Each pupil was to fill out the blanks in a printed sheet. Margie did not know to what use the sheets were to be put, but filling in the blank spaces was easy. At the top of the sheet was "Name of Pupil." Below that were other spaces for "Place and Date of Birth," "Birthplace and Occupation of Father," "Birthplace of Mother," and similar questions about grandparents, with the addition, "If Known." Margie could have written down the names of generations farther back than that, for the history of her family had always interested her,

and she went at once to work. Father, of course, was born in Concord, where all the Carlins belonged, and father was an editor. Mother had been born in Gordonsville, where the Gordons belonged. Grandfather Carlin was a Concord man, too, and a minister. Grandfather Gordon was a Kentuckian, and a preacher. She was just filling in the last line when an odd little noise from Ione across the aisle startled her. Ione had both arms on her desk, and her face hidden against them. Her body was shaking with sobs. Her curls had fallen forward on each side of her neck, and the pretty gold beads showed. Her feet were drawn up under her, and the hand with the turquoise ring on it was shut tight. What could have happened to Ione? The girls went out presently for recess, but Ione still sat at her desk, with her face hidden.

"Did Mr. Hunt say something to her?" Margie asked of Flo Hewitt.

"No," Flo answered; "she's crying because she has to tell what her father does."

"Why, he keeps a livery stable," said Margie.

"That was when he first came," Flo explained. "Now he is bartender at the Coliseum."

The Coliseum was a variety theatre, of which one spoke with bated breath. It was a more wicked place than one could quite understand. Ladies never walked in that street nor in the

streets near it. It was a part of the evil of the world of which Margie was coming to understand vague hints. The joy of the Pharisee filled her. How splendid it was to have a father of whom one was proud. A barkeeper for a father! She had never seen a barkeeper, but she knew being one meant unspeakable degradation. She put on the old cloak and went out with the scarf flung over her shoulder. What did a shabby cloak matter when you were the only girl in school whose father was an editor?

After a little, her mind went back to Ione. How was Ione going to manage to face the girls again? What was there she could do? Margie went back upstairs into the school-room again. Ione was still at her desk, but she was not shaking now. The openness of her shame seemed terrible to Margie. Her own instinct to conceal unpleasant things was so strong. There was something sickening about the hopelessness of Ione's situation. It was like seeing Mr. Hunt whip one of the boys. It was a thing one could not bear to look at. She wanted to pretend she had not noticed it. She wanted to help cover it up. She leaned across the aisle and touched Ione.

"Does your tooth ache very bad?" she asked.

Ione's arms relaxed a little. She raised her head long enough to nod.

"I'll ask Mr. Hunt if you can go home," Margie said.

It was easy to ask Mr. Hunt. He and Margie were friends in those days. He accepted the pretense without question. Margie and Ione walked to the cloak-room together. Neither of them spoke till Ione had put on her ulster. Then Ione said:

“Will you tell the girls I had to go home because I had an awful toothache? That’s what made me cry.”

Margie merely nodded. She was glad to have Ione go away. She looked at Ione’s smart ulster, and at her own shabby cloak. Deliberately she called to her mind all the unpleasant things in her own life which she had before evaded. She looked them all square in the face. It seemed almost a luxury to do it, to marshal them all in array and then set over against them the facts that made them nothing. Ione had a pretty ulster, and her father was a bartender. Margie had a shabby cloak, but her father was an editor.

CHAPTER IX.

JULIA.

MARGIE was nearly fourteen before she found a successor to Lena Bean, and the successor was something more to her than Lena Bean had ever been. In the last year of Lena Bean's chumship, Margie had been the leader. Toward her new friend, Julia Weston, her attitude was altogether that of a devotee. Julia was her ideal.

The Grammar School was divided that year, and Margie was sent to the new North Side school, nearer her home. A few of the girls there she knew already. They were different in some way from the South Side girls. None of them was rich like Ethel Ellis, and most of them liked to be helped with their lessons. The question of money was of less importance now to Margie. Things were better with father. He added to his income by editing the Dakota supplement of a city paper. Margie was plainly dressed, but no longer shabby. She liked her new teacher, Miss Starr, and she was very friendly with Minnie Stuart and Jennie Hatch—friendly, that is, in a mild way. She was not on confidential



Toward her new friend her attitude was altogether that of devotee.



terms with either of them, and felt that they admired her, even if they did think her queer, more than she admired them. Then one day Julia Weston came to school. Julia was sixteen, and had never been to school before. She was a Canadian by birth, and her father owned one of the big wheat farms miles to the north of Adams City. Julia had been educated by a governess.

At first sight Margie thought that Julia looked as she herself would have looked if she had been prettier. Julia seemed in some way a realization of her day-dreams of herself. From the very first, Julia was delightful. She had the most charming and self-possessed manner. At recess on the first day she spoke to Margie and told all about herself. She was like the people in Gordonsville who belonged to families. She wanted to know at once who everybody in the class was, where they all came from and what their fathers did for their livings. These things mattered to Julia. She talked like a young lady and she was altogether charming. She played the piano well, and wrote a fashionable hand, but she was simple and unaffected to a degree. She was not clever, and from the beginning of their friendship Margie did her lessons for her. In all her life Margie never knew another person whom she admired so uncritically as she did Julia. Even Julia's way of walking a bit pigeon-toed was lovely. Margie prostrated herself before her

idol. Julia accepted her devotion. She was too gentle to be exacting, too sweet-tempered to make demands. She admired Margie's cleverness about books, and thought Margie had so much character.

Margie never put into words her love for Julia. She lived it. Miss Starr was an inspiring teacher. Margie loved to write. Miss Starr encouraged her. It was a joy to Margie to have a composition to write. Minnie and Jennie detested it. Julia declared she simply could not write. Margie had written compositions for Jennie and Minnie, but they were the sort one could dash off in an evening. When it came Julia's turn to read a composition, Margie spent two whole days writing one for her. Julia did not care what it was about, and when Margie suggested "Novels and Novel Reading" as a title, Julia agreed readily enough.

"Don't make it too long," she said, "and write it plain so I can copy it."

Margie put her whole soul into it. It seemed to her that it was written extremely well. The first paragraph led off grandly:

"In this, the Nineteenth century, the subject of novels and novel reading has become one that must be thought of and settled by every one, for the current literature of the day consists almost entirely of novels. Novels have been called en-

lightening and refining, and they have been called the very reverse, and if read to excess certainly do more harm than good. They should be read in moderation. Good reading is instructive, interesting and harmless."

Margie had read a great many books, and skimmed through more. She mentioned the names of all the great books she could remember, and spoke with high disdain of persons who chose to read trash. She classed French literature as "not of the highest order of morality, though Victor Hugo has written some celebrated novels." She spoke of the books which had accomplished great things for one cause or another—"Nicholas Nickleby" and "Oliver Twist," "Uncle Tom's Cabin," "Ramona," "The Bread Winners," "A Fool's Errand." "Of all the books written on the Mormon question," she said, "none have done more than call public attention to this enormous evil." She passed then to authors whose books had happened to appeal to her. "Synove Solbaken," she said, "made the reputation of Bjorne Bjornsterne." Toward the end she expressed a conviction that within the next fifty years the reign of the dime novel would be over, and "we shall have a better class of people, with no time wasted in foolish reading."

For herself, she had read one Old Sleuth

story and enjoyed it immensely, almost as much, in fact, as "The Reveries of a Bachelor" and "Tom Sawyer," but one does not express one's personal taste in a composition. Compositions, when you are not trying to make them funny, must be correct in tone. The composition about the seasons, in which one led off by saying: "The principal seasons are salt, pepper, mustard, and vinegar. Besides these, there are spring, summer, autumn, and winter, January thaw, Chinooks and Thomson's seasons," was a funny one. Minnie read it and laughed all the way through. Julia's composition must not be funny, it must be serious. Julia never read anything at all, and didn't understand why people wasted time on books, and the composition pleased her very much, indeed. She copied it in her beautiful, stylish hand, and read it on a Friday afternoon when there were visitors. Only a few of the words made her hesitate. It was a great day for Margie. After school Miss Starr beckoned to her and to Julia carelessly.

"I liked your composition," she said to Julia. "I didn't know you had read so much. What was the story, by the way, that made Bjornsterne's reputation?"

Julia blushed. She never looked embarrassed in an awkward situation. She merely flushed prettily, and looked down, so that you noticed how long her lashes were.

"Syn——" began Margie.

"I thought so," said Miss Starr. "Next time, Julia, I think you'd better write your own composition."

That was all, but Julia and Margie walked away crestfallen. Julia was not angry. She was altogether sweet-tempered, and an injustice such as Margie had done her merely made her feel hurt.

"I don't think it was kind of you to play me a trick like that," she said, reproachfully. "If you will insist on writing my compositions, you might consider me enough to fix it so Miss Starr won't find it out."

"I'm awfully sorry," said Margie. "She wouldn't have known it if I hadn't stuck in that Synove Solbaken. But I wanted to make it good."

"It was good, all but that," Julia admitted. "Where'd you get the name?"

"I read the book," said Margie. "It was one of the kind you ought to like, you know."

"What was it about?"

"About a girl. You aren't angry, are you?"

"Oh, no," said Julia, with her charming smile. "You didn't mean to hurt my feelings. I'll let you write my next composition."

"I don't think I'd better."

"Oh, goodness, yes. Why, I couldn't write

one to save my life. Only, for goodness' sake, don't let it be about books."

It was not about books. It was an impressive production with few proper names in it. Julia read it over four times, and was prepared for questions. Miss Starr asked none. The title of the essay was "The Origin of Man."

* * * * *

Margie's father and mother were charmed with Julia. Her manners toward her elders were perfection, and she was so transparently naïve that it was impossible not to like her. She seemed, with her wholesome cheeriness, an ideal friend for introspective Margie. Sixteen, however, is a great deal older than fourteen. Julia was a young lady. Her two elder sisters were great belles, and scarcely a young man in all the town but was devoted to one or the other of the three pretty Westons. Julia's admirers were not school-boys. They were young men of eighteen and nineteen, and the early twenties. Julia could not understand any one caring for a man with a moustache, but she admired men of the world. "Men," she said, "who are fast." "Fast" had in Margie's mind an association with horses. It suggested the quality of being thoroughbred. Men who were fast, she learned from Julia, were dashing and fascinating. They played billiards and smoked cigarettes, and won

and lost money at poker. They drank, too, but in a nice way. They took too much wine, but they were never really drunk.

With men like this Julia contrasted the slow ones, like the two Jenkins boys, who taught in Sunday-school, and thought dancing wicked. Against the background of the spineless goodness of the Jenkins boys—one of them had come to see Sister Betty several times, and was fat, with moist, soft hands—the fast young men Julia knew seemed doubly attractive. Margie began to feel a desire to be wicked. Wickedness was so much more fascinating than goodness. Tom Houghton and Hunter Dunbar, who came to Julia's house often, were delightfully wicked. They talked of the great sums they had lost at poker, and Tom said he had no faith in anybody on earth. Women were never to be trusted. And he looked so wise and cynical saying it that Margie had not the slightest doubt he had been as wicked and broken-hearted as Byron. He wrote verses in which he held everything up to scorn. Hunter was a Southerner, and it was well known that he had challenged John Jenkins to mortal combat for the way he talked about people who danced. John Jenkins had refused to fight, whereupon Hunter had declared that he was not a man of honor. Tom was twenty, and Hunter was eighteen, and they were both in love with Julia. Margie still retained her old shyness, and had

no personal feeling for either of them, but she gloried in possessing a friend who had such men for admirers. Their attitude toward her had but one sting. They considered her a child. They did not know that she, too, longed to be fast.

Now and then she went to stay all night with Julia, and after they were in bed, Julia told her all Tom and Hunter had said. It was as exciting as a novel. In the evenings, too, at Julia's, they played poker, with beans for chips. Tom and Dunbar talked as if poker were the most serious thing in life. They referred to this big game and that which they had sat in, and spoke of dollar limits as if dollars were no more to them than beans. Margie reveled in the wickedness of all this. Once when Tom gave her a real poker chip she carried it to school in her pocket, hoping it would fall out and scandalize everybody. Think of having a poker chip roll out when you stood up to parse!

The idea of being wicked for wickedness' sake appealed to her less than being wicked as an assertion of her rights. If men were wicked, why couldn't girls be, too? She proceeded at once to attain her end. Julia came to stay with her one night. Hunter and Tom called that evening, and Tom sang a great many dissipated-sounding songs. One was about the son of a Gambolier, and another was a parody on "I'm a Pilgrim, and I'm a Stranger." They were the sort of

songs men of the world sang at stag suppers, when, as Hunter said, "wine flowed in rivers and every man swam." They did not talk like this while Mrs. Carlin was in the room. She said they were pleasant boys, and Sister Betty called them "trundle-bed trash," though not, of course, to their faces.

Father came in just as they went away, and Julia and Margie sat with him while he drank half a bottle of ale. When he had gone to bed, Margie seized the bottle and ran upstairs. She and Julia were now to acquire the ability to say that they, too, drank. It dashed Margie's glee a trifle to know that Julia had already tasted ale, but that was when Julia had been ill, and the doctor had advised it. Margie herself had taken rock and rye for a cough, but swallowing things you are told to take is not drinking. They locked the door of Margie's room, and with great caution poured the ale into two glasses. It had so bitter a taste that Margie could not swallow all her portion, and it was necessary to pour it stealthily out the window, but it was glorious to feel that one was now beyond a doubt fast. They both felt that they were as intoxicated as one could be and still be nice.

One other downward step, however, must be taken before they could feel themselves fully initiated. Tom and Hunter smoked cigarettes.

Julia purloined two from her father's cigarette-case, and one day, after school, they set out to seek a safe retreat. They chose Island Park, and the very little hollow where Margie had fought her long fight with despair. No one could see them there. They sat down solemnly. It was a serious occasion. They were about to pass the Rubicon. After they had smoked they would always have a guilty secret to conceal. They would no longer be mere Grammar School girls, but women with pasts. Margie had smoked corn silk and lady cigars that grew on trees down in Gordonsville. There had been one day, too, when she had smoked a rattan cut from an old umbrella. She had done it out of sheer curiosity, and without the desire to achieve a past thereby. The consequence of the rattan had been a long afternoon spent under an apple-tree, dying a most unpleasant death, and wondering if the birds would have time to cover her with leaves before her corpse was discovered. The recollection of this made her grave, but did not deter her. Julia produced matches, and they essayed to light their cigarettes. It was no easy matter doing that in a wind. Julia said their failures showed there was no Irish in them. Margie took off her hat and, behind the shelter of it, lighted her cigarette. The first puff strangled her, but she got her breath again while Julia took a light from her. Then gingerly they

held their cigarettes and smoked. It took a very long time to smoke half an inch, but they kept on. Margie forced a laugh once or twice.

"What would people say if they saw us?" she said bravely.

Her cigarette kept raveling out in her mouth and seemed to have no draft through it. It was necessary to light it several times. Julia, too, kept picking shreds from her tongue. After her cigarette went out twice, she did not try to light it again. She merely held it in one hand and looked straight ahead.

"Oh, Margie," she said, "it makes me feel too awful for words!"

Margie let her cigarette go out. For a long time no words were spoken. They heard the rustling of leaves. The rector of Julia's church came strolling along the edge of the hollow. He was smoking meditatively as he walked, smoking a pipe. He smiled down at the two girls absently, and spoke without ceasing in his ramble.

"Oh, my dears," said he, "enjoying the beauties of the greenwood?"

He went on without waiting for a response. Julia and Margie merely groaned. The next day Margie summed up her impressions in one significant sentence in her diary.

"I do not believe," she wrote, "that dissipation ever makes people really happy."

CHAPTER X.

A ROMANCE.

THERE is something extremely contagious about a love affair. Margie was not long a bosom friend of Julia before she felt that she, too, ought to have a romance. Julia was now engaged to Hunter, but it was a profound secret, so profound that it in no way prevented her from encouraging Tom and half a dozen other boys. She liked Margie in the gooseberry rôle, for Margie never dreamed of claiming anyone herself. She was all for Julia, and bent her mind to schemes Julia would never have thought of, to the end that Jennie and Minnie would have no following whatever.

For the first time now in Adams City there was a dancing school. Everybody went. It was precisely like having a party every week. Mr. Carlin had a card for Margie in exchange for advertising, and Julia and Hunter, with Tom or a lesser satellite, called for her every Friday evening. Margie danced well and enjoyed the dancing school very much. By

skilful manœuvring, it was possible to keep Jennie and Minnie from dancing with the best partners. Margie liked them, but they were as nothing compared with Julia. Margie enjoyed working for Julia. It was so easy to catch a boy through his curiosity and his vanity. One had only to say to Tom, "I heard something about you," to make him dangle about all the evening, in the hope of finding out what you had heard. And you could hint that Julia knew, too, and after that Minnie and Jennie did not exist for Tom. To mention a "trade last" set Hunter guessing. It was not mean to Jennie and Minnie, either. In Adams City there were at least three times as many young men as girls, and if Julia had the cream, there was plenty of excellent milk for Jennie and Minnie.

It was delightful to see Julia, so charming, so heartless, so utterly careless of how many boys were ready to cut their throats on her account. Julia was always like the heroine of a romance. If Margie began to want a love affair of her own, it was only that she wished to be like her adored Julia. It was a want that was not long unsatisfied. Patsy Welch came to town, and Margie was promptly "kersmashed." "Kersmashed" was a word of Julia's. Most of the girls said "mashed," but "mashed" wasn't quite a nice word, Julia and Margie thought. Patsy Welch was a profes-

sional ball-player. Adams City and five other towns formed a league. Everybody went to ball games that year. Play began as soon as the frost was out of the surface ground. It is all summer coming out of the six-foot depths to which it sinks in a Dakota winter. Mr. Carlin had a season ticket to the baseball park, and never missed a game. Neither did Margie. She was an enthusiast over baseball, and understood the game well enough to keep a score-card, marking errors, triple plays, passed balls, strikes and fouls as completely as the official score-keeper himself. She would have gone to ball games with father in any sort of weather even if there had been no Patsy Welch. Given a Patsy Welch, the ball park became Paradise. Patsy was pitcher. Intricate, misleading curves were the fashion then, and Patsy was a wizard with the ball. He was Margie's first hero.

In her first year in Dakota, when the golden spike which completed the Northern Pacific had been driven in, General Grant had passed through Adams City with the party of great men, and had stopped to make a speech in the bandstand in the little park facing Front street. Margie, on the edge of the crowd, heard nothing, but suddenly the people before her fell back to right and left, and a short, plain, bearded man held out his hand to her. It was one of the great disappointments of her life. She had imagined Grant

a blue and gold figure on horseback, waving a sword. He was nothing but a man. Patsy Welch, however, did not disappoint her. He looked 'the hero. He seemed to her like the Greek, god-like hero she had read of in one of Ouida's novels. He was even young Apollo himself. Seen from the grandstand he was perfect. His gray suit fitted him trimly, and its open collar showed a statuesque neck. His teeth were dazzlingly white, and when he threw off his cap to catch a high ball, one could see that his brown hair curled crisply. Every movement was graceful. He was brave, too. Slides that would have appalled an ordinary man he took without hesitation. Margie admired him most on the day when he played the last three innings with the gash of the second baseman's spiked shoe showing scarlet on his forehead.

It was a long time before she told Julia of her "kersmash," and possibly she would never have told it if Julia had not come to stay all night with her. Darkness coaxes secrets out of one. Julia was sympathetic and confessed that she, too, thought Patsy too sweet for words. She was for devising some scheme of meeting him. Several of the boys knew him, but Margie shied at this. It was enough for her to worship from afar. She liked to dream of meeting him in all sorts of romantic situations. He might save her from a burning

house, or stand between her and a mad dog, or she might warn him of some terrible danger, or find him dangerously wounded and bind up his wounds. An introduction would be too commonplace, and, besides, unless she met him in some heroic way, she would not be able to say a word to him. One couldn't say, "I'm glad to know you," or "Pleasant day, isn't it?" to Patsy Welch. She did not even look at him when she met him in the street. At first glimpse of his lounging figure at a corner, she looked away and tried to walk gracefully, hoping he would notice her. Once she saw him across the street as she was going into a store. He was at the store door when she came out, and she was sure he looked at her, but she walked away as fast as she could without being ungraceful. Hunter told her that Patsy had asked who that good-looking girl was that came to every game. He had mentioned her hat, so there could be no doubt he meant her.

School was out now, and the Westons had gone back to the farm. Margie wrote a twenty-four page letter to Julia about Patsy. She remembered to put in something about Tom and Hunter and the other boys. They came to call on her now and then. Mrs. Carlin thought that boy and girl friendships were charming. "Tom and Hunter," she said, "have such nice manners for boys of their age. There is nothing of the hobble-de-hoy about them." She was accustomed

to say that she had always been in Margie's confidence, and, indeed, Margie told her everything except the things she would not have been pleased to hear.

Julia's answer was only twelve pages long, and it was for the most part questions. She asked Margie to visit her. Her two elder sisters were at home, and they had a quite old-young lady and Hunter's elder brother visiting them. Her elder brother was home from college, too, and Hunter and another boy were coming to visit him.

"We'll have a glorious time," Julia wrote.

Margie had not been on the cars since she came to Dakota, and never in her life alone. Westonborough lay forty miles to the north, and the Weston farm ten miles beyond that, or, at least, the Weston home was that far from the town. The farm itself comprised ten or twelve sections, and was parcelled off into three divisions. The Westons lived at headquarters, where the office of the farm was. Westonborough was not nearly so large as Adams City, but it had a baseball club in the league.

Margie journeyed north feeling very important. She had never been away from home before without her mother, and it was a great occasion. There was nothing to be seen on the way but the limitless stretch of the prairie, a plain of wheat, already beginning to ripen into gold. It was all

beautiful to Margie. At first, the sunsets in the Dakota summers had frightened her. It was awesome to see the sun hanging in the west, blood-red, and flattened out of shape. The sentinel sun-dogs at each side of the sun in the winter had seemed terrible at first, and the terrific storms had made her afraid. Now, the prairie suggested merely the freedom of a wide horizon. She loved it.

There were only two or three settlements between Adams City and Westonborough, all alike—bare, wooden buildings, with streets of gray-white dust, flanked by wooden sidewalks. Here and there she scented the rank smell of a reed-grown slough. Johnny Halderman liked the smell of the slough. He said that with his eyes shut he could fancy himself on the salt marshes near his New England home at low tide. Years afterward the salt marshes were to bring the Dakota sloughs back to Margie.

She was a little uneasy as the train neared Westonborough. Father had told her to go to the hotel if the Westons were not there to meet her, but she had no idea of how to get into a hotel. The formula had never been imparted to her. It was her habit to make up beforehand the speeches she meant to make to a shopkeeper, or to any one with whom she had an errand. She did not know what one ought to say on entering a hotel. It was a relief to find the Westons'

buckboard waiting. Julia was driving, with Hunter beside her. On the back seat was a boy of about Hunter's age. His name was Kirby Bolt. His father owned most of the "bonanza" farm which touched the Westons, and was some sort of a lord in England. Julia had spoken of him often, but Margie did not know, until they had driven several miles, that this was he. Julia called him "Bob." Margie was startled when she realized that she was sitting beside the son of some sort of a lord. He was merely a pleasant, freckled boy, not half so romantic-looking as Patsy Welch. He did not talk much. Julia's chatter gave him little opportunity. When she pulled herself up in the midst of a question with a "It's rude to talk before you of people you don't know," Kirby Bolt merely answered:

"Go on. It's no end jolly, you know."

Margie liked him at once. He made no pretense of being anything but a boy. There was none of Hunter's weary man-of-the-world air about him. When Hunter offered him a cigarette he said he didn't smoke. Hunter looked over his shoulder a trifle superciliously.

"Don't you drink, either?" he asked.

"No, I don't," said Kirby Bolt. "What's the good? It isn't as if I couldn't, you know. The pater doesn't object, so—where's the good?"

By and by he began to tell Margie about Har-

row, where he had been at school. She had to ask a great many questions to find out anything. He seemed to think nobody could possibly be interested in Harrow. He said he found America awfully jolly, but the people had such a larky way of chaffing a fellow, and they spoke such extraordinary English. They didn't go in for sport, either. Kirby Bolt thought baseball a most unintr'esting game. So different to cricket, which was a game a fellow might show some form in. Margie lost all interest in him at once. What did an Englishman know about things, anyway? She was glad when they stopped at the first division of the Weston farm, and Kirby Bolt left them. They saw him mount his horse and ride toward home. He bounced in the saddle in a way none of them thought graceful.

Margie's recollection of her stay at Weston Farm was a long whirl of gaiety. Nobody seemed ever to sleep. Everybody was bent on having a good time. It was not at all like being on a farm in Illinois. The house was big and bare. It had only living-rooms and bed-rooms. The dining-room was in the superintendent's house just across the croquet ground, and beyond that house was the men's house, with dining-room and kitchen downstairs, and dormitory above. There was a blacksmith shop, and an ice house, and huge barns, but no vegetable garden,

and no poultry yard. The Westons sent to town for all their supplies.

Till cutting began, nobody seemed to have anything to do. Young men rode or drove miles to see Julia's sisters, and all the party would drive on another day to dinner ten miles in one direction, and to supper ten miles in another. It was often daylight when they came home, but their daylight came three hours after midnight and lasted till nine in the evening. After cutting began, they would pass the reaping machines, seven abreast, mowing their multiple swath in mile square fields, as they drove home.

The climax of all their merrymaking was a ball in Westonborough. The ballroom was a loft over a livery stable, but a waxed canvas made the floor perfect for dancing. The orchestra was a bass viol and one violin, and nobody for twenty miles around stayed at home that night. Julia and Margie wore white muslin. Julia's sisters were in ball gowns of pink and blue. The barber's wife was dressed in black silk, with white slippers, and the waitress from the hotel danced in pink calico. Hunter and Kirby Bolt were in evening dress. Julia's brother, Fred, insisted on wearing a gray sack coat. The postmaster wore a frock coat, and the livery stable-keeper a Norfolk jacket. Yes, everybody was there, and everybody danced—danced heel-and-toe polkas, and waltzes, and

Portland fancies, and lanciers, and waltz quadrilles, and schottisches, and in every square dance the fiddler called out the figures. It was all noisy and merry and gloriously good fun. The Weston party had come a little late, but with three men for every girl there, nobody could lack partners. Kirby Bolt did not reverse when he waltzed, but he whirled about with so much spirit that dancing with him was really more fun than dancing with Hunter, who waltzed perfectly. Margie was standing beside Kirby Bolt, catching her breath after one of his dizzying whirls, when Hunter and Julia stopped beside them. In the next moment a hand fell on Hunter's arm and a voice said: "Say, gimme a knock-down to Miss Carlin."

Patsy Welch had arrived. He had pitched a winning game that day in Westonborough, and perhaps he was flushed with something beside victory. Hunter, taken unaware, presented him to Margie. Then it seemed to her that everybody drew away and left her with her hero.

"I seen you at all the games," he said, showing his dazzling teeth. "Is his nibs that goes with you your father?"

"Yes," said Margie.

"I thought so," said Patsy. "I knew you wouldn't be going around with no old feller unless he was one of the family. You ain't that kind,"

Margie felt as if she were going to scream. This Patsy? This her Greek, god-like hero? This common creature who looked at her in that familiar way, and said "seen"? There was an odor on his breath as he bent nearer her that disgusted her. It was like the—yes, it was whiskey. She had taken a dose of that once when she had been seized with a chill. She was frightened and miserably ashamed. Suppose this dreadful, common man found out that she had admired him? For an instant she had a great longing to run home and tell mother. Then a waltz began, and Patsy swung her out on the floor. He held her closer than Hunter and Kirby Bolt ever did, and she tried to push herself away. Patsy danced well, and enjoyed himself hugely. It pleased him to bang into people and knock them to one side. Margie turned over in her mind a dozen schemes for getting rid of him. Suppose he thought she went to games merely to see him. Out on the diamond he was so different. And she had enjoyed games in which he did not play. She waltzed on miserably twice about the room. She could not tell Patsy she wanted to stop, without turning her head, and he had been drinking. Hunter and Tom talked a great deal about drinking, but one never smelled whiskey when one danced with them. Near the end of the room she caught sight of Kirby Bolt, standing, watching her. He

looked so clean and good and boyish. As they passed him, Patsy gleefully slammed against a couple. The impact made him lose step. Kirby Bolt stepped forward quickly.

"I am afraid Miss Carlin turned her ankle then," he said.

"Yes, yes, I did," said Margie, eagerly. "Let me sit down."

Kirby Bolt found her a chair.

"Go on and dance," she said to Patsy. "Go and find somebody else. I don't want to dance any more."

Patsy bowed low and went.

"Rum sort of a chap, that," said Kirby Bolt.

Margie looked at him gratefully.

"It wasn't rum," she said, "it was whiskey. Oh, I do wish I was at home with my mother."

CHAPTER XI.

A BROKEN BOND.

THERE is no moralist so uncompromisingly stern as your reformed rake. Margie came back from Westonborough prepared to write "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin" on the face of the world. She had tried dissipation and she had tried romance, and neither of these things had proved satisfactory. It gave her a melancholy pleasure to feel that she had lived deeply. "I have lived and loved," she wrote in her diary. "Henceforth I shall live for higher things."

The immediate high thing was the High School. She entered it just ten years from the day when she had sat on the gate-post and watched George Budd march off into an unknown world. School began a week before the Westons came to town, but Julia traveled down in advance of them to stay with Margie. Margie loved her more dearly than ever. There was even an element of the maternal in her love, for

Julia cared for follies which she herself had outgrown. She felt immeasurably Julia's senior, and no longer took an interest in Julia's love affairs. She had none of her own, and never should have any. Friendship, unalterable and eternal, sufficed for her. She wanted it to suffice for Julia, also.

They had a delightful week together. The High School was on the South Side, and the classes sat in what had been the Grammar School room when the building was new. To reach the school, Margie and Julia walked down Broadway and, turning at a right angle up Front street, passed all the shops and hotels. It was a triumphal progress when they started on the second day with their new books. In the Grammar School there was always a geography, which looked so very childish. Grammar School books in general were thin, with titles printed on the front. High School books were all of a size, and thick. The Latin Grammar and lesson book and the Algebra had leather backs, and the Physics and Physiology, which completed the pile, were imposing. People seeing one, would naturally be impressed. They could not know that one was in the lowest class. With the Latin Grammar on top (and Margie had Betty's, which was old), the book next to it might very well be taken for a Cicero. It was almost like going to college. One knew

a great deal when one began to go to High School.

The High School was a delight to Margie. She was not a student, and in schools arranged for the average intelligence, she had never needed to be. It had never been an effort for her to stand first, or second, at least, in most classes. Arithmetic she had always detested, and had never been certain about adding, until she devised, at Major Winchester's suggestion, a method of adding by subtraction. If she had a seven, say, to add to twenty-five, she added ten first; and seven being three less than ten, subtracted three from the result. She worked always with ten, for ten was the number of her fingers. In any study in which success depended merely on committing things to memory, she was always pre-eminent. Grammar she had been fond of in the Grammar School. She passed naturally to a love of Latin Grammar. Latin satisfied her love of romance. It belonged to the dreamland of classic stories. Algebra was not so pleasant, but it was in no way so bad as arithmetic. Letters were not ugly to look at, as figures had always been. Physiology was only mildly interesting, and it added to no one's happiness to know about how one's organs worked, but Physics was a constant joy. In the Adams City school there was no laboratory. The teacher made a few simple experiments before

the class, and the rest one committed to memory, taking the book's word for them. Physics explained the why of things.

Julia was not fond of studying, nor was she able to learn readily. That Margie should learn on the way to school one morning all the prepositions which govern the accusative case, seemed incredible to her. She did not understand that they went with a certain rhythm, and were splendid words to say. She never felt uncomfortable at all to feel that she did not know what she was expected to know. She was content to slide along. Margie would have been glad to slight lessons, too, but right in what the Physiology taught her was her solar plexus, there was an empty feeling, or, as the Physics called it, a vacuum when she thought of going to school with a lesson unlearned. Julia never felt empty except in her stomach. When Margie tried to explain about the vacuum she said she thought Margie had a conscience that troubled her. Margie was sure it was no conscience. She did not believe she possessed such a thing. She had been wicked, and if she had had a conscience it would have brought remorse upon her. She felt no remorse.

People with consciences, girls especially, always confessed to their mothers what they had done. She had never felt any pricks of conscience about concealing her past from her

mother. She could see no sense in getting herself a scolding. She disliked unpleasantness immensely, and hated to be in disfavor. No, she had no conscience about her studies. She had merely a vacuum. She was not even moved to explain things to the teacher when Julia, asked to tell to what declension "fructus" belonged, said "Second," thus giving her the clue to the proper reply, "Fourth." If she had been called on first, she would have made Julia's mistake, and if she had possessed a conscience she would have told Miss Kent so. George Washington would have done it. Lack of conscience made her regard herself at times as hardened by the life she had led, but callousness pleased her, rather than otherwise.

Of her real code of morals she was in no way conscious. If Ione had infuriated her, she would have flung back the taunt that Dave, whom Ione admired, was going with somebody else. It would have been impossible for her to mention Ione's father. It never occurred to her to tell one girl what another girl said against her. Even when she said mean things about girls herself, she never mentioned their physical defects, and she was scarcely civil to anyone she disliked.

Now, Julia liked everybody, and Margie cared for no one but Julia. The South Side girls were new to Julia, but Margie had known them and formed no intimacies among them, in an earlier

day. She had always remained on friendly terms with Ione, who lived nearer her than the other girls, but after Julia's coming she had dropped all other friendships. The Westons took another house that winter, a large one near the High School, and Julia's way home lay in an opposite direction from Margie's.

At first, Margie enjoyed introducing Julia. Julia belonged to her, and she was immensely proud of the possession. Then, little by little, the South Side girls began to know Julia, not as Margie's friend, but as herself. She liked them, and they liked her, for no one could help liking Julia.

Margie began to feel a little out of things. Julia was finding other girls of sixteen, girls who had a keener interest in boys than Margie had ever pretended. She was essentially gregarious. She enjoyed popularity. Margie was not popular. Her likes and dislikes were violent. She was indifferent and sensitive at the same time. She was both devoted and exacting. She was not jealous of Hunter, nor of any of the other boys Julia was "kermashed" on, but she was jealous of every girl Julia spoke to. In the old days they had doubled teams against Jennie and Minnie. Now, Julia wanted to 'shut no one out. Margie still helped her with compositions, but the girls in the second class assisted at her lessons. Slowly Julia drifted away. Margie had

no impulse to make friends with the other girls for the sake of being in Julia's circle. She preferred to flock by herself and to nurse her growing sense of wrong.

It was a cruel autumn for her. Winter was at hand, but she deluded herself with every chance day of Indian summer warmth. Sometimes she went home with Julia after school, and was happy, till some of Julia's new friends dropped in. Julia seemed to expect her to enjoy the addition of a third to their confidential two. Two was vitally company to Margie, and three a crowd. Julia liked a crowd. Margie went home from such visits morose and sombre, but it was not in her to accept disaster while there was still some room for hope.

Hope was crowded out when Anna Roberts organized her toboggan club. Margie had known Anna for years, and had never liked her. Anna had seized upon Julia at the very beginning of the year. Like most of Julia's new friends, she was in the second-year class, and she lived near the Westons. Also, she admired Julia's brother Fred.

It was the year when tobogganing was most in fashion. There were no hills in Adams City, unless one could call the rise of the river banks a hill, but with a long and steep wooden chute to lengthen this at one side, and the ice of the river to prolong it on the other, the river bank became

as fine a slide as any in the Northwest. By night, flaring torches lighted it, and no matter what the degree of cold was, it was never deserted from noon till midnight on any day of the winter. No one was too old, and few were too young to toboggan. At the shelter house at the foot of the stairs which led up to the head of the chute, toboggans were for hire. The stove there was always red hot, but on many a day the frost covered the windows with a coating furry and entirely opaque.

Tobogganing on chutes scarcely wider than the toboggan itself required little skill. It was only when one struck the smooth ice of the river that a foot trailing behind was necessary to keep the toboggan from spinning or swerving. If one touched the wooden guard at the side of the chute with a sleeve on the way down the friction burned through as if a hot iron had scorched there. That, too, when the cold of the descent left one at the bottom with frost on one's eyelashes. Few of the girls owned toboggans. A toboggan was incomplete without a boy to risk a moccasined toe in steering, and in a country where boys were so plentiful it was unnecessary to possess a toboggan of one's own. Every girl, however, must wear a blanket suit, a toque and a sash. Blankets come in pairs, and it takes but one to make a suit. Margie saw in this fact a happy significance.

She and Julia, sharing a pair of blankets, would have suits alike. She mentioned it to Julia one morning in the cloak-room before school.

"Why," said Julia, "Anna Roberts asked me last night to join the Silent Six she's getting up. She's already ordered the blankets."

It was not for Margie to know that the facts of the blankets being made in pairs had brought this about—that and Anna's admiration for Fred. There were only five girls in the second class who were in Anna's set, or, indeed, in anybody's set, for the three other girls who made up the feminine half of the class were not the sort that belongs to things. The extra blanket must go to some one, and, naturally, it went to Julia. Julia saw in it merely a delightful opportunity to have good times. Margie saw in it betrayal. Julia had deserted her.

The hurt went deep with Margie. She could not console herself with other friends, for she knew no one she loved as she loved Julia. No one had ever been to her what Julia was, and she told herself that nobody ever would be again, which, as it happened, was precisely true. She took it tragically. Walking home in the winter twilight that day, she was too unhappy to put her thoughts into sentences, and it had always been her habit to think in words. She said over and over to herself, "Oh, Julia! Oh, Julia!"

Twilight on the snow always affected her as

few other things did—only moonlight, and an October afternoon, woke the same feeling in her—a wistful melancholy, a something not quite sadness, that she had no words to express. This evening the prairie seemed a part of her desolation. She walked far out beyond her home, to the frozen sedges of the slough. Formulated thoughts came to her slowly. She did not feel angry at Julia. It seemed to her that if she herself had been more lovable, Julia would not have cared for Anna. She knew she was sarcastic and aloof, but she saw no way of being different.

"I have tried to be like people, God," she said aloud, "but I can't. I don't know how. Perhaps if I could do things—have things like the other girls—I've had so few clothes—I could never give Julia a really good time—nobody much wants to know me. I wish you'd made me different or not made me at all."

Her throat ached. She turned away from the last glow in the west and went home. Her head ached, she said, and she didn't care for any dinner. It was not a matter she could tell her mother. Her mother liked everybody, and everybody liked mother. Mother could not understand why you didn't want more than one friend, why you didn't know how to make friends even when you wanted to. Mother was lovable. So was Betty. Mother called Betty "Daughter,"

and once, when Margie, hearing her from the room below, had answered, "Here I am," mother had said, "No, I want Betty." Margie was not "Daughter." She was merely "Honey," or "My Baby Girl."

Margie went to her room with the intention of crying all night about it. She was asleep when her mother looked in to tuck her in for the night.

Julia's defection was, however, a very deep and lasting hurt—a deeper hurt than any but a very young girl can ever feel. It was impossible, though, that she should dwell in despair long. It was her way to add to any hurt all the other agonies she could conjure up. She would go on and on till her imagination had shown her the utmost depth. And the utmost depth was something so terrifying to look into that a glimpse of it sent her scurrying back to comparative cheerfulness again. Standing where the brook and river meet is standing unsheltered against all the blasts that blow. Margie hugged her morbid jealousy to her breast and lived a blighted being. Betty said she was as cross as two sticks, and mother had her take medicine.

In time, a week, say, she began to write poetry about Julia and Julia's falseness. A diary had taken the place of the buried ciphers of her childhood, and it was written, as they were, with an eye on some future sympathetic reader. Nobody's side of a story but her own ever went

into her diary. The poem on Julia took up a whole page:

“I sat by the western window
At the close of a winter’s day,
Watching the bright hues of the sunset
Blend with the twilight’s gray.
Far from horizon to zenith
The sky was all aglow,
And the gorgeous tints of the vault of Heaven
Were reflected in the snow.
Then slowly the glory faded,
Night let its dark curtain down,
And one by one the stars came out,
And the lights were lit in the town.
But still I sat by the window,
And my thoughts were all of you.
Have you broken our bond of friendship?
Are you false, or are you true?
I fear that your vaunted friendship
Was but a sunset glow,
And faded as quickly as that did,
Leaving no light on the snow
Of my life, made more dreary without you.
Ah, me! and I trusted you, too.
But is not this the way of all friendships,
And is this anything new?”

At the end of the page Margie wrote, “*In memoriam meus Amor pro Julia.*” Later she

changed it to "Amor meus Juliae," but being uncertain as to which form was the better Latin, and having some doubts about both, she finally scratched the words out and left the poem as it was. It seemed to her a remarkable composition. "Vaunted" worried her a little, but it seemed a better word than "boasted," which she thought once of using, though neither word quite suited the case. Julia had never said anything about being fond of Margie, and Margie had never mentioned adoring her. She treated Margie precisely the same after the betrayal as before. She was always sweet to everybody.

Even if one has been basely betrayed, one must go on living, and there are still toboggan slides and clubs. Minnie Hewett organized one and invited Margie. Minnie admired Margie, who did not lack satellites at any time. Admiration is soothing when one is blighted. Minnie and Margie divided a pair of blankets. Margie declined, as it were, on Minnie. Minnie thought she was the most original creature on earth, and Minnie's father said she was the only girl he knew whom he really wanted as a friend for his daughter. Minnie detested Anna Roberts, and said things which were pleasant to her, though Margie wouldn't have said them herself. It was not the same as having Julia for a friend, but it was better than being alone. Margie had several friends now, and domineered over them.

They tobogganed, and they tramped the country on snowshoes, and they went to parties. Under it all, though, Margie's heart ached for Julia. She felt that she would have given her life for Julia, and, in spite of all, was still prepared to do it.

Toward spring the ladies of one of the churches arranged a fair. It was held in the Opera House, which, having a level floor, was an excellent place for it. There were booths for the sale of all manner of fancy articles. There were tableaux and, most engaging of all, there was a fan drill. Sister Betty sang, and the rest of the time she was a Greek girl, in a booth. Margie was in the fan drill, and Julia was in three different tableaux. The girls piled their wraps in the dressing-rooms back of the stage. It was a rainy night, and Margie wore the apple of her eye, a brand-new gossamer, or rain coat. This, with her rubber overshoes and her umbrella, she placed carefully in one corner.

To be in things was the delight of her life. She enjoyed reciting "How He Saved St. Michael's," at school. The only unpleasant thing about it was saying it over beforehand to the teacher. A single auditor embarrassed her. An audience thrilled her. She was in a seventh heaven of delight while the ten girls went through their fan drill, waving their fans and bowing and marching. Afterward she gazed

sadly on Julia in the tableaux. Julia was the prettiest girl there. Everybody said so. Margie told her what everybody said when they met out in front. Hunter said so, too, but Tom was gallant enough to say that Margie had been the most graceful girl in the drill.

They were standing near the back of the hall under the gallery when he said it, and he broke off his last word with a cry. Before their eyes a tongue of flame darted from the corner of a bunting-covered booth, and widened into a sheet.

“Fire!” shouted a dozen voices. The crowd seemed to hesitate an instant, and then swept toward the door. Margie was knocked against a pillar which supported the balcony, and clung there. She did not feel afraid.

“Come on!” yelled Tom, tugging at her Japanese dress. It tore in his hand, but Margie clung obstinately to her pillar. Her one idea was to get to the dressing-room. She could not go out into the rain without her rubbers and her gossamer. She knew a drenching would give her a cold, and, besides, if she did not save the gossamer it would be burned. Some one stepped on her feet and tore her slipper off. More than ever now she could not go. And she must save the gossamer. If she didn’t get it, it would be burned. She must save the gossamer.

She did not see anyone tear down the blazing bunting and stamp out the flames. She did not

see people begin to come back, shamefacedly. She merely clung to her pillar and thought about the gossamer. It was only when Betty, who had been swept out in the panic, came back that she thought of anything else. The one idea then was to get home with the gossamer before the fire began again. On the way home she heard Betty and Father talking of people who had been hurt in the jam on the stairs.

"You did just the right thing," Father said.
"But why didn't you keep Julia from running?"

"Julia?" said Margie, vaguely.

"Yes; Julia was badly bruised when she fell."

Margie scratched out several lines in her diary after that. One was about being willing to die for Julia's sake. On the page in which she described the fair, she wrote: "I am glad everybody says I showed presence of mind," but she made no mention of the gossamer.

CHAPTER XII.

AN IDEAL AND A REALITY.

MR. CARLIN had a cousin in Nebraska who owned a large daily paper. He had often urged Margie's father to accept an editorial position under him, but Mr. Carlin, who was a shy and reticent man, disliking changes, and dreading the necessity for meeting strangers, was disinclined to make another move. It was not until Mrs. Carlin's health failed that he decided to go. Mrs. Carlin had always missed the trees of Gordonsville, though Margie did not know till years afterward how bleak the bare prairie seemed to her. Once in the summer before the wheat was cut, Margie had run in to call her mother to see a curious thing. Far away to the west there had suddenly appeared a lake with green trees about it. The ripples were dancing in the sun. Mrs. Carlin watched it a long time.

"It's a mirage," she said. "I wish we could rest in the shade of the trees."

There had been little rest for her in Dakota. Long afterward she told Margie that she had

always meant to go some day to the narrow belt of woods along the river, and lie down in the shade and cry, but there had never been a day when she could spare the time.

Margie was not really sorry to leave Dakota. She saw no way of adjusting herself to a future without Julia in it. She was uncomfortably conscious that she had not quite lived up to her ideal of devotion, but there would never be anyone to take Julia's place. She had never taken root in Dakota. The sun there seemed always to rise in the north, and in the winter, after Julia belonged to her no more, the prairie, too, betrayed her. She had come to love it for its free, wide outlook. The winter twilight had reflected her desolation. Nature appealed to her only as it expressed her moods. Now, the prairie became a thing of terror.

The Carlings' house was on the edge of the town, and in winter, when the slough was frozen, the shortest way home lay across it, and across a stretch of open prairie. The walk from the place where she turned from the street, to home, was not longer than two city blocks. Margie was four hours crossing it that day, four hours alone with the prairie and the blizzard.

The storm seemed to swoop down from a clear sky. In an instant she was shut in by a whirling curtain of snow. It stung her face, blinded her, tore the breath from her lungs. The wind came

from every direction at once. She could see nothing but the snow.

She was not frightened at first. Home was not far off, and she knew the way. The prairie was merely romping with her. She had crossed the slough, and that was half-way home. There could be no real danger unless she recrossed the slough and went off on the prairie. Out on the prairie it was not safe to venture from house to barn in a blizzard. Sometimes they wandered off and walked in a circle till they died, men, and animals too, and lay where they fell. Ole Peterson, at school, had no hands. The blizzard had taken them. His father and mother had started with him to drive to town five miles away. The blizzard caught them. Three days afterward, when somebody found them, Ole was alive. His father and mother had wrapped him in their cloaks. Ole had no hands. And they found him only a few yards from his own home, after three days. Margie dropped to her knees. She was not praying. She was groping for some land-mark. She took off her mitten to feel what it was she touched. It was wheat stubble. She had recrossed the slough. She was lost. She was all alone in the blizzard out on the prairie, and Ole had no hands. She got up and went on blindly. No, that was the way people began when they started to walk in circles. She knelt again. Was it wheat stubble or frozen grass?

The snow was drifting deep now. She could not find the stubble. After that it was a blind daze of horror. She was not getting warm and thinking she was at home, as people did when they were freezing. Her feet were dead, but she was lost. The thing to do was to walk fast. You must walk fast. The snow under her foot slipped a little. There was ice under it. Here was the slough again. It was dark-gray, terrible white-dark now. She followed the slough. It led to a railway track in one direction. A sidewalk crossed it in the other. If your feet were dead you could crawl and feel with your knees. Even after your hands were dead, too, you could go on. It was not so cold now.

They heard her stumble up the steps. Mother opened the door. She wanted to go in and sleep, but you could not do that. Your hands and feet must be waked first.

After that Margie dreaded winter. The cold was not weather. It was a Giant Spirit of Evil that stalked the prairie. It was a thing. In Gordonsville the snow had been soft and friendly. On the prairie it was dry like sand. And all winter long it never rested. It drifted. The prairie was never quiet. The snow never stopped drifting. Margie was afraid of the cold as she might have been afraid of the dark.

And in the summer, early in the summer, when the stalking cold was gone, and you could bear

the endlessness of the prairie again, another Evil Thing came. The prairie was still one day, and hot. Stiller than ever before. Looking out the window she saw a strange and unnatural thing. The clouds were not moving all in the same direction. Something was wrong with the sky. There were two storms in it, and they were rushing toward each other. They met and boiled and turned a coppery green color, and where they met something narrow and long trailed down and dragged on the prairie. Mrs. Carlin saw it, and when her lips turned white they all knew what it was. One of the girls at school had been in the Minnesota cyclone last year. She was not hurt. She was at her aunt's house, two blocks from home. Her mother and father were in the path of the cyclone. A cyclone path was so narrow. You might run and run the wrong way. It might skip you if you stood still. It might kill you if you did not run. People took quilts and went down cellar and crouched close to the wall, where they felt sure. Sometimes they were safer if they ran out and lay flat on the ground and held to tufts of weeds.

The cyclone swayed. It was making up its mind whom it wanted to kill. It chose the river path. It went in leaps, and down in the town it took hold of the top of the iron open frame of the tower on which the great electric light was, and twisted it round and round. All it took from

the town was a tin roof. It cut a path across the river, and then it began to kill.

Margie was afraid of the prairie. There was no place in it to hide. She wanted to stay indoors and have four walls bound the world. There was no end to the prairie.

And indoors she spent most of the early summer. She had a new friend now whom her mother did not know. Mrs. Hendricks was a newcomer in Adams City, and Mrs. Carlin was too busy with preparations for the new move to make her usual effort to know Margie's friends. Margie had had Mrs. Hendricks at the Opera House, on the night of the panic, and Mrs. Hendricks had asked her to come to see her.

"I know you like books," she said. "Come and read mine."

Margie went. It was such a library as would have been remarkable anywhere. Mr. Hendricks, who was seldom at home, had been wealthy at one time, and books were his passion. Margie had no idea that some of the books were rare, and a few priceless. Mrs. Hendricks merely took her into the library and said:

"Make yourself at home. I don't care for books myself, but choose what you like. Come here and read, or take books home. The ones Mr. Hendricks will not lend have his book-plate in them."

The library was an upper room, running

across the house. The book-shelves were built against the wall, from one side of the room to the other, twenty feet away. They reached to the ceiling, and they were crowded. It was a wonderland. At home one had to treat books with a certain respect. Mother had a way of saying: "You are skipping. That isn't the way to read."

Here at Mrs. Hendricks' you could skip all you wanted to, read the last chapter first, if you chose, and go through in jumps from one thing that interested you to another. Margie was utterly without conscience in the matter. The "Essay on Novels and Novel-Reading" did not trouble her at all. She forgot everything on earth but books.

Wilhelm Meister was the first she read. She had heard her mother say that to understand it one must read it three times. Half of one time was all Margie tried. Mother read it in the original German. Probably that made it have more sense. Keats and Shelley and Swinburne and Jean Ingelow and Walt Whitman, Margie read, and a little of each of them stayed with her. The saying of Whitman, "Only themselves understand themselves and the like of themselves, as souls only understand souls," she never forgot. People were hard to understand, and birds of a feather did flock together in just that way. Rousseau's "Confessions" she found

dull, but oh, what a treat "Evelina" was after you got used to the funny old letters, and stopped thinking the long s's with the f sound! "The Three Musketeers" kept her spellbound all one long afternoon.

It was pleasanter to read in the library than to take books home. They were heavy to carry, and out of five or six, you might not find any you cared for. That had happened when you carried Balzac home because "Cousin Bette" sounded like Cousin Betty at home, and when you began on "Père Goriot" you saw at once that the whole lot were going to be harrowing and unpleasant, and full of things you did not understand. You never even opened "Cousin Bette" after that. "Vanity Fair" happened to be missing from the set of Thackeray at home. Margie did not skip one word of it. Mr. Hendricks had written on the margin of the page where George lay dead with a bullet through his heart: "This is the most perfect English I know." Margie never forgot the lines.

She chanced on other books, too, that held her. There was a little of everything in Mr. Hendricks' library. One book made an epoch.

In the rearing of her daughters, Mrs. Carlin had not been reticent. Ignorance was not innocence to her, but there were many questions it had not occurred to Margie to ask her. The

book answered them. She brought away from it an ideal of womanhood that made her nearer her mother than she had ever been before. It was a thing they talked of together in the twilight. How much it meant to be a woman. This was why women must be good. God had given them for a beautiful and holy mission.

Julia was in Westonborough when Margie left Adams City in August. There was no one else she cared to say good-bye to, and even Julia was not a heartache now. She was looking forward to a new and delightful experience. Mrs. Hendricks was going to join her sister and her sister's husband in camp in the pine woods beside a Minnesota lake, and she asked Margie to go with her. They went two days before mother and Betty left Adams City. Margie was to join them at the station in the town near the lake as they passed through on their way to Nebraska.

The camp was set on a little bluff at the edge of the lake, and it seemed like a bit out of a story to Margie. She found, too, that the Haldermans were in camp near. Mrs. Halderman and Johnny had been in the East for nearly a year, and Margie had not seen them for all that time. It was pleasant to go out on the lake with Johnny. The tall pines were more beautiful from the water. Beneath them one felt a little shut in, and Johnny had a fancy that they knew some terrible secret. It made them dark and

grim, and their whisper of it turned the birches white with fear and made them tremble. And the camp-fire at night, with the moon-trail on the lake. It was all a wonder to Margie. It made her ache with the longing to put it all into words. It was not merry. The pictures in the fire were of Gordonsville. The moon-trail led away into the country where home was.

She and Mrs. Hendricks shared a tent together, and when bedtime came on the first night Margie was glad of the shut-in feeling of it. The night was too wide to sleep in without something over your head. It stretched clear away to the prairie. And the cold toward morning would be a thing like the prairie if one were outdoors. The wind in the pines was comfortable to listen to under shelter. And the lapping of the waves on the pebbles was the talking of the moon-trail.

All next day there were the woods and the lake to enjoy. They were merry things by daylight.

In the afternoon Mrs. Hendricks said she had a headache. She did not come to the dining-tent for dinner. Her sister said she would sleep it off. She often had headaches, Margie knew. They lasted several days, sometimes.

It was very late when Mrs. Hendricks' sister and her husband left the camp-fire. They were pleasant people, who liked to joke and sing.

Margie was content to sit and watch the pictures in the fire.

When they said good-night she went into her tent and lit the candle. Mrs. Hendricks was lying on one of the cots. She had not made ready for bed yet. Margie spoke to her and she answered in a curious, muffled voice. She lay in a curious position, too, her head half off the cot. Margie was frightened. Mrs. Hendricks breathed so heavily, and her face was so red. She went to her and tried to rouse her. Mrs. Hendricks muttered. Margie's foot touched something beside the cot and overturned it.

As she bent over Mrs. Hendricks and lifted her head to a more comfortable position, the truth flashed over her. She knew what was in the bottle she had overturned.

She had meant to call Mrs. Hendricks' sister, but now the only thing in her mind was the impulse to run from this dreadful thing. She put on her traveling dress and flung her belongings into her traveling bag before she thought of how she was to get away. Where could she go?

She remembered the Haldermans. She might go to their camp—but how could she tell this thing she wanted never to speak of, never to think of again? Not to Mrs. Halderman. Mrs. Halderman might speak of it to others—it was her way. Margie took her traveling bag and went out blindly. To get away was the one

thing. She saw a light in Johnny's tent. He often sat up late reading. She went toward it. Johnny would not have to be told.

She stumbled along through the trees to his tent. He heard her and came out.

"Don't ask me anything," she said. "Take me to the station. I must go."

Johnny did not ask any questions. He knew. He did not try to stop her. He had no impulse but to help her get away. He took the bag from her and guided her through the woods to the road. It was near midnight now, and the station was three miles away.

Margie could not talk. Her teeth chattered with cold. Over their heads the long streamers of the northern lights flickered up, pale, frozen, liquid fire, till the whole sky was alight.

"Look, Margie!" said Johnny. "It's like an umbrella."

The effort to distract her failed. She was saying over and over to herself:

"I must get back to Mother."

She walked fast. The road was sandy, and the pines cast deep shadows. It was all horrible. She was chilled through, and the night and the northern lights and the long, sandy road seemed unreal, like a nightmare.

There were no lights in the village as they passed.

The station, too, was dark, except for a light

in the telegraph office. Margie did not know what Johnny said to the telegraph operator. She did not think of it at all.

The operator started a fire in the stove and lighted the lamp. It was August, but frost was in the air. Margie put on her cloak, and Johnny and the telegraph operator found something to serve as a pillow. She did not sleep till dawn. Johnny waked her before the early train came. He had brought her a sandwich and a cup of coffee, but she could not touch either.

It was nearly noon when the train with Mother and Betty on it came.

"You look all tired out, honey," was the first thing Mrs. Carlin said.

Margie could not bear to speak. The comfort of being safe with Mother—oh, the comfort of being safe with Mother!

CHAPTER XIII.

IN SAFE PLACES.

MARGIE's first feeling toward Nebraska was that it was a place where one could feel perfectly safe. The town was many times larger than Adams City, and the houses were built nearer each other. The streets were paved, and at night there were a great many lamps. All this added to the feeling of security. The sun, too, seemed to rise in the east again, as it had done down home. Home always meant Gordonsville to Margie. She felt more friendly toward Betty than ever before. For the first time they had the same friends. Betty was so good.

Margie felt that everywhere about the safe places in the world there were dark places full of dreadful things you didn't understand, though you knew now you had never been fast. You wanted to be good now, like other girls, and stay in the safe places. Sometimes you would feel the vague evil of the world near you, in the same way that you heard something behind you when you came downstairs in the dark, or you felt uneasy about it as you felt uneasy about hanging your arm over the edge of the bed at night. Something under the bed might grab it. But

if you never looked back over your shoulder, and kept your arm under the cover, you would never know what the evil really was, and you could forget about it. Margie had no curiosity. She was only afraid that she would have to know some day what was outside the safe places.

Betty always seemed safe. Margie supposed that her sister had never had a wrong impulse in her life. She was always unselfish, and Margie knew that she herself was considered a selfish nature. Betty told her so once when they fell out. The Carlins never quarreled among themselves, but once Margie had done something which seemed to Betty utterly selfish. She had brought a book home from Mrs. Hendricks, read it, and carried it back without giving Betty a chance to read it.

“I didn’t think about your wanting to read it,” had been her excuse.

“You never do think of anybody but yourself,” was Betty’s answer, and it cut the deeper because it was the only really unkind thing Betty had ever said to her. It was true, and Margie felt the truth of it, but she did not think she was selfish. If she had thought, she would have let Betty read the book. Mrs. Carlin’s unselfishness made it impossible for her to understand Margie. She made no demands. Margie was glad to do whatever she was told to do, but did not see things to be done. It was not selfishness in

her. She was introspective. The formula for unselfishness had never been imparted to her, and she required formulæ. She brought home flowers, or candy, or fruit and divided them, because she had been taught this. She dressed Betty's hair when Betty was going out, because Betty asked her. It hurt her often, that in a family where she was asked to do so little, she should be considered selfish, because she did not do. It seemed to her unjust, because in the bottom of her heart she wanted to be unselfish.

Betty never understood why Margie never wanted any of the family to come to school when she recited. The presence of Betty or her mother always embarrassed her. She had an unformulated fear that they would think her ridiculous. They might see that when she recited something thrilling, little shivers were playing down her back and in the roots of her hair. They made her feel foolish just as reciting to herself in the mirror did. The Carlings never spoke of their emotions nor of their affection. Margie was ashamed of emotion. It would never have occurred to her to speak of her feeling about twilight. Mother often sang old songs in the dusk, but Margie never spoke of the twilight sound in them. She had never told her mother that she loved her and thought her beautiful. It made her feel foolish to think of saying such sentimental things. She had one secret with her

father that they never spoke of. Once when she had been a very small child, and mother, who had been ill, had gone away, she herself was seized with severe illness. Every night when all the other people in the house were in bed, father came and sat beside her till morning. Nobody but Margie knew about it. She understood how he felt. He did not want to seem sentimental. Margie envied people who could gush, though she was often ashamed for them.

It was easy to feel like other girls in Nebraska. Mrs. Carlin's cousin, John Holyoke, had a daughter a little older than Margie. Ella Holyoke at once assumed toward Margie the attitude Margie had assumed toward Julia. Friends were ready-made. There was no making a place for one's self, no getting acquainted. Ella had a niche ready for Margie, and it was a comfortable niche. There were friends for Betty, too, and people came to see mother almost as they had done in Gordonsville.

Ella thought the right things for girls to think, read the right books, had the right manners. She was so safe. The girls she knew were all of her kind. They were friendly and decorous, and it struck terror to Margie at times to imagine what a gulf would separate her from them if they knew all. They were so careful about what they said and did.

Ella made a point of never saying an unkind thing of anyone. Margie's habit was to say exactly what she happened to think, and it did not trouble her at all to remember that she had been good friends with Minnie Hewett after saying all sorts of mean things about her to Julia. Minnie did not know that she had said them, and she had changed her mind, anyway, afterward. Margie felt that if she had been sincere and honorable like Ella, she would not have acted in that way, but it was a comfort to her to say mean things when she was out of temper. Naturally, you said things about people behind their backs that you wouldn't say to their faces. You didn't want to hurt their feelings, even if you were mad at them. Ella once said something mildly unkind about Bessie Pursell, and felt so badly about it afterward that she went to Bessie to tell her of it, and to beg her pardon. It was noble of Ella, but Bessie never liked her afterward. Margie thought this perfectly natural of Bessie. She told Ella one had no right to scour off one's conscience that way. She thought Ella ought to have kept still. Ella said keeping still made her feel mean. Margie thought she ought to feel mean. She sometimes felt mean herself, but not about saying things about people, because what she said she believed to be true when she said it.

Ella had been very carefully brought up, and had never gone anywhere with a boy in

her life. She never sat up late to finish a book. She was one of those persons to whom the thought that the book will still be there in the morning is a reason for leaving off at the end of a chapter. Margie swallowed books whole and read everything she came across. Ella kept a list of the books she read, and wrote her opinions of them in her diary. She read one really good book a month.

Ella was a church woman. Margie liked to go to church with her. The Holyokes were Episcopalians, and the Carlins were nominally Presbyterians, but Margie had always gone to whatever church she liked. She liked the good feeling church gave her, the splendid sound of the prayers, the rising and kneeling, the effect of the rector's gown. She liked the sermon, too, because during a sermon she could think so much better than at any other time of things to write. She never really heard a sermon. Ella thought some of the rector's sermons so helpful. This was Greek to Margie. It was like the way people had of talking about laying all your troubles on God. God had never been a help to Margie in time of trouble. She told Him about her heartaches, but the ache was never any the better for it, except that the telling itself was a comfort. She had gone to a revival once in Adams City. The evangelist had told about how wicked he used to be.

"But now," he said, "I am happy, for Christ has taken all my sins away."

Margie wondered how the people he had sinned against felt. How could he be happy if, as he said, he had broken his mother's heart? What good would it do to be forgiven unless you could forget what you had done? The revival had frankly disgusted her. It was so undignified. Nobody but a coarse man would talk about his mother's heart, anyway. Ella's religion was soothing and pleasant, if you didn't stop to think. If you thought, you couldn't say the creed, because you couldn't understand it, and you couldn't say you believed a thing unless you knew what it meant. She tried to explain her point of view to Ella when Ella urged her to join the church.

"Can you understand why two and two are four?" Ella asked.

"No," said Margie; "they just are."

"Well, then, why need you expect to understand the mystery of the Trinity?"

"But you can see that two and two are four, and you can't see how Three can be One."

"Aren't mother and father and I three persons, and one family?" Ella demanded.

"Yes, but neither of you is ever the other."

"We are one in spirit always," said Ella. "Oneness of spirit is what the Trinity means."

Margie knew that Ella and her mother had

disagreed that morning before church, but she did not like to mention it. The reservation deprived her of her only argument.

Ella was extremely progressive, and not at all hidebound about religion. She impressed that on Margie. She did not believe that the heathen who had never heard the Truth would be damned. Margie did not believe so either, but she did not consider the idea an evidence of broad-mindedness. It was merely the way of thinking that made you most comfortable. Ella believed, of course, that people who had a chance to know what was right and didn't do it would be punished. Anybody could be good if he wanted to. She herself had had to struggle with a very bad temper.

"But suppose you hadn't wanted to struggle?" said Margie. "Could you make yourself want to struggle if you didn't want to struggle?"

"You reason in a circle," said Ella.

"I wasn't reasoning—I was asking. I was wondering what makes some people want to struggle and others not want to. Who's to blame if they haven't the wish to be good?"

"They are," said Ella. "They harden their hearts."

"What makes God let them do it?" Margie cried.

This was too much for Ella. There was that in her eye that warned Margie. If you wanted

to be like other people you must be careful what you said. In order to be near you must be aloof in spirit. You must not shock people.

One had to be more careful with Ella's friends than with Ella. One was always in danger of being thought queer. And then at times one felt as if people were daring one to be queer. The Gordons never took a dare. Why in the world shouldn't one say what one thought? One could at home. Mother didn't think you were queer because you said the days of the week came in strips, marked off into different sized oblongs, and no two the same color. But the girls at school said, "The idea!" and looked at you as if they were all together, and you all alone. Didn't everybody see a picture of the days of the week?

And how often you had to check yourself when you were in the midst of some account of something you had done in Dakota. Poker—suppose you told them you knew how to play that? They couldn't understand that you had never gambled. Ella belonged to a club that gave parties in a hall—but Ella never danced more than twice in an evening with any young man. She said a young girl had to be so careful. What was the good of the whole thing?

"I wear a mask," Margie wrote in her diary. "I smile, I seem to be happy; but under it all there abides my real self. I am restless. I am

alone. Oh, this wild, wind-swept emptiness of soul!"

She had no idea what she meant by wind-swept emptiness of soul, but it sounded as nearly like the way she felt as anything she could think of. She felt she was not understood. This made her feel superior. She felt, too, that she did not understand other people, and this made her wretched.

She was writing a great deal now—writing in the erotic style which was then in fashion—stories and poems of passion, of startling boldness, all evolved from her innocence. She wrote, too, articles for the school paper in the Bill Nye vein. She thought of herself as a cynic and as an enthusiast. She was either perfectly happy or altogether miserable.

School was pleasant. The big building on the hill gave her the far outlook she loved, from every window. She liked the Latin teacher immensely. They read Cæsar that year, but a few of the boys and girls who liked Latin had an extra hour a week to read with the teacher books not in the course. Margie read the extra Latin from choice, but this did not prevent her from talking about Cæsar behind his back. She happened not to like the teacher of ancient history because the lady had an offensive habit of pronouncing r's at the ends of the words that ended in a's. And one day she went to the class with

an overwhelming desire to be hateful. The question asked her was, "Who was Julius Cæsar?" And with feeble maliciousness she answered, "The worst swelled head that ever lived." It was merely her way of making a face at the teacher. It was also a sign that being good after Ella's pattern was beginning to wear on her.

That afternoon, after school, Bessie Pursell, whom she knew slightly, came to take her driving. Bessie was not one of Ella's intimates, but she was as proper and ladylike as any of them could be.

They talked about school. Bessie said she thought she was getting a firmer grasp on mathematics than ever before.

"Geometry trains the mind so well," she said.

"I think it tends to form character," said Margie.

"So do I," Bessie agreed. There was a pause after that.

"Have you read *Ben-Hur*?" Bessie asked. Margie had a prejudice against *Ben-Hur*. She thought the figure of Jesus in it undignified, and she had heard the chariot race recited too often.

"It's a very fine book," she said.

"I think so, too," said Bessie. "I think we ought to choose only the best books to read—like *Ben-Hur*, and, well—the *Elsie Dinsmore* books."

"So do I," Margie assented. "Good books are very beneficial."

"I think so, too," said Bessie. "I am reading 'At the Mercy of Tiberius' now."

"Do you like it?"

"It's a very fine book."

"I should like to read it. Are you fond of Dickens' works?"

"I have only read a few, but I am fond of 'Nicholas Nickleby.' It seems to me very good."

"It did to me, too," said Margie. What would there be to talk of after they had exhausted literature?

"It was very kind of you to take me driving," she said. "I am fond of horses."

It was not true, for Margie was afraid of horses, but it was something one ought to say.

"So am I," said Bessie. "Horses are so intelligent. I like to take people driving who can talk about books."

Just then, on a street corner, they saw a young man. He swung his hat off the length of his arm.

"My! He's a jim-dandy!" said Margie before she thought. The effect on Bessie was astonishing.

"Why, are you like that?" she said. "Here I've been scared to death of you. I was afraid to say a word for fear I'd shock you."

"Were you?" cried Margie. "Why, I'm all choked up with things I didn't dare say."

Bessie giggled gleefully.

"Let's go back and get that boy and go on a regular jamboree," she said.

They caught him and put him on the back seat of the cart, and Bessie drove downtown and found another boy to put beside him, or, rather, to put beside herself, for she moved Margie to the back seat, and off they went, giggling and chattering, not men of the world and women who had been fast, but good, merry and utterly happy boys and girls.

They drove by Ella's house, too, and Ella saw them. Precisely what Julia had done to Margie, Margie did to Ella, and it never troubled her a whit. Ella was so tiresome, and so mean about always wanting you to have no best friend but her.

CHAPTER XIV.

A NAME ON A FAN.

BESSIE was not adorable like Julia, but Margie found her immensely amusing. Julia's coquetry had been unconscious. Bessie's was pre-meditated. Margie knew her for a month before she discovered that Bessie's hair was not naturally curly.

"Why, I thought you brushed the long hairs smooth," she said, as she saw Bessie set to work with the curling tongs, "and the little short ones just curled of themselves."

"They're all as straight as the line of duty," said Bessie. "I don't curl any but the short ones. That's what makes it look natural. Ella crimps all her long hair, and there are always nine straight ends in front of each ear. They're a give-away. Ella doesn't understand the science of it."

"The boys don't like Ella," said Margie. "You can tell they don't by the way they speak of her intellect."

"I'd just as soon be cross-eyed as intellectual," said Bessie. "Ella knows things, but she hasn't any sense. She always informs people of things. Men just hate that. They want you to ask them questions."

"I heard you asking Breck Carr to show you how to dance the York," said Margie. "I just saved myself in time from saying you and I'd been practicing it for a week."

"My! Suppose you'd told!" giggled Bessie.

"Well, I didn't. I didn't say a word when he told you you learned it faster than any other girl he ever knew."

"I had on new slippers that night," said Bessie.

"And you made me stick at the piano all evening."

"Well, you've got good hands," said Bessie. "Playing shows them off. You know it, too. You're always talking about palmistry."

"You told me to talk to Fred about it—you know you did."

"I'm teaching you things," chuckled Bessie. "The only trouble with you is that you will argue."

"Well, if I know a thing's so I'm going to stick to it."

"That's the very time to let go. Where's my powder rag? Did you ever notice that Ella never puts powder back of her ears?"

"I didn't know you powdered," said Margie. "Your nose never looks powdery, and Ella's does."

"That's the difference between Ella and me. Ella hasn't a particle of sense."

Bessie and Margie had a gay time of it after that; but in Bessie's good times there was no hint of anything that anybody's mother would not be pleased to hear. Her wildest recklessness consisted in driving downtown in the surrey in the afternoon and passing the general offices of the railway just at the time when the young men came out. Sometimes she and Margie drove around several blocks in order to arrive on time, and they giggled. But when they passed the office building, and the boys they knew ran out to speak to them, Bessie always said, "Why, I hadn't any idea it was so late."

Bessie liked all the boys, and the two who scrambled into the surrey first—sometimes three managed to get in, and sometimes even four—were the ones she took for a drive. Most of the boys she knew were Kentuckians with very strict ideas of what was due a lady. They never smoked nor spoke of drinking before Bessie and Margie. They liked to be devoted, but they did not make love.

Bessie was not sentimental. She was merry and feather-headed and utterly care-free. She laughed a great deal, never very loud, and

never for any particular reason. Being sixteen meant to her being happy. When you were twenty, possibly, you might be serious and think about loving somebody—somebody your father liked, somebody who could take care of you well, but at sixteen you merely had fun. The more boys you had around the more fun. Margie, for the first time in her life, felt herself like other girls. The boys called her Miss Margie, and pretended to be a little afraid of her, but they were all such safe people, well-bred and good.

Margie never went to church with Ella now. She went to the Presbyterian church with Bessie on Sunday evenings, and they had to tuck their heads down often to keep from giggling out aloud. Bessie's father always went with them, but he was absent-minded. After church he walked out a step ahead of them, with his hands behind him, looking thoughtful. Bessie dawdled just a moment, and then the boys outside the door fairly broke their necks to be first to ask to walk home with her. Fred Winthrop usually walked with Margie, but not always, for the other boys were keen about cutting each other out. And the boys who were left always acted broken-hearted and said Miss Bessie certainly was cruel. Sometimes, too, the other boys would scurry around by a side street and reach Bessie's home before even her father did. Sunday evening was the time

when they made calls. Bessie and Margie never walked home fast, but they always came by the way Bessie's father took. There was nothing in it all but the unshadowed good times of boys and girls, such times as Margie had never known before.

Ella was the only cloud in their sky. She disapproved Bessie's frivolity, but insisted on cultivating her, in the hope of exerting a good influence. "Cultivating" was the word that she used, and Bessie promptly named her "The Harrow." She never failed to ask Margie and Bessie to all the parties she gave.

"Well, you've done it now," Bessie said, reproachfully, after Margie had accepted for them both Ella's invitation to a literary and musical evening. "We've got to waste a whole evening being bumps on a log."

"You'll be all right. She asked you to bring Breck Carr," said Margie.

"Yes, and she'll snap him up the minute he gets there and put me up on the mourners' bench with one of those pet ganders of hers."

Ella's "pet ganders" were most exemplary young men, but Bessie found them dull.

"You can sit on the stairs with him," Margie suggested.

"Are you going with Fred?" Bessie asked.

"No; he isn't invited. Ella's going to send her new Mr. Tompkins after me."

Bessie giggled.

"I tell you what let's do," she said. "Let's all go late and sit on the stairs together. We can talk there."

"All right," Margie agreed; "but I don't know a thing to say to the man."

"You won't have to talk. Just look soulful, and start in by telling him he looks like an actor."

Margie giggled.

"I will," she said. "I'll just wind him up and let him spout."

"Do it," said Bessie. "I dare you to flirt with him. He never did anything so reckless as sitting on stairs in all his life."

They timed their arrival at the party so accurately, Bessie and Breck calling for Margie and Mr. Tompkins, that they could not enter the drawing-room without interrupting the programme. Clearly, sitting on the stairs was necessary.

"Start in," Bessie whispered, as she seated herself a few steps above Margie. Margie started.

"Do you know," she said, "the first time I saw you I asked Miss Holyoke if you were an actor?"

Mr. Tompkins beamed.

"I have been told I resemble Edwin Booth," he said complacently. "In the East I used to take part in the entertainments of our dramatic club, and I may say I hope—with appearing

to praise myself unduly—that I was not altogether bad."

"I should think you would do splendidly," said Margie. "You have such a good voice."

Another poke from Bessie.

"Oh, I don't know as to that," beamed Mr. Tompkins, "but I am able to make myself heard. Miss Holyoke has asked me to give a reading later in the evening."

"I'm so glad," said Margie. "I'm dying to hear some one from the East recite. My father is an Eastern man."

"Ah," said Mr. Tompkins, approvingly, "that's why you remind me so much of Eastern girls. Most Western girls, you know, are so boisterous. I've seen them do so many things one doesn't do at all in the East."

"I think the girls out here are spoiled by too much attention," said Margie. "It makes them frivolous."

"You're quite right, quite right," murmured Mr. Tompkins. "Modern society is hopelessly frivolous."

"I suppose it's worse here than in the East, isn't it?"

"Very much so. That is why it is such a pleasure to me to find some one to whom I can talk sensibly. Life out here is very crude, but, you know, so many Westerners take it amiss if one says so."

"I don't see why they should," said Margie, leaning back against Bessie's toe. "I think we ought to be glad to have people from the East come out here and tell us our faults. We ought to enjoy it."

"You're quite right, quite right. It's the only way in which the West can ever improve. May I ask you if you are at home on any especial day?"

"I'm home almost every day, unless I'm in school," said Margie. "Why?"

"I was going to ask if I might be permitted to call, and continue our acquaintance. I find it is the Western custom for a man to ask permission. In the East, of course, the mother of the young lady usually extends the invitation. Out here a man might wait forever to be asked."

"That's so," said Margie, maliciously. "A great many Eastern men notice that."

"Quite a few of them have mentioned it to me. May I hope, then, to see you at some future time? I fear I must excuse myself now and find Miss Holyoke."

"My mother is usually glad to have our friends come in at any time," said Margie.

"Thank you so much. I shall give myself the pleasure of calling very soon."

Mr. Tompkins rose and descended to the drawing-room.

"I declare, Miss Margie," said Breck Carr,

"if he'd talked any longer about the West like he did I certainly would have kicked him. If he'd opened his mouth about Kentucky I'd have lifted him clear through the front door."

"He meant well," said Margie. "I used to hear Yankees talk that way in Dakota. They don't know any better."

"They act like a lot of Columbuses," said Bessie. "There was a man at our house once, and when he saw my great grandfather's portrait he said, 'Why, I didn't know Westerners had ancestors.'"

They all laughed gleefully at that.

"If he comes to see you," Bessie went on, "just run out the back way and down the alley to my house. I'll come over and talk to him."

Mr. Tompkins took steps for the continuing of their acquaintance no later than the next day. He wrote Margie a note. Bessie was with her when the postman brought it, and they read it together. Mr. Tompkins asked permission to call on the next Sunday.

"I hope you will not misunderstand me if I tell you of my engagement to a young lady in the East," he said. "I am sure it need be no bar to our further acquaintance."

Bessie shrieked with laughter.

"He doesn't want you to cherish any false hopes, Margie," she said. "Oh, this is too good to keep."

"If you tell, Bess, I'll never speak to you again. The miserable little prig!"

"And you led him on! You charmed him! You just yearned to have him civilize you!"

Margie laughed in spite of herself.

"There's a postscript," said Bessie. "'May I ask if you are any relation to the Carlins in my native city, Greensburg, Ohio?' Oh, my goodness, Margie, and he said he was from the East!"

"Ella said he was a Harvard man. I naturally thought he was a Yankee," laughed Margie. "Oh, how awfully crude we must seem compared to Greensburg, Ohio."

"You ought to put it in your diary," said Bessie. "He'll be a lesson to you not to be so fascinating. You've got to let him come and you've got to be nice to him. If you don't, you know, he'll think you're broken-hearted over his engagement. You've got to let him tag everywhere you go after this."

"It's your fault," said Margie. "You put me up to it, and you ought to come over and help entertain him."

"Not me," said Bessie. "I tell you what—just say you have an engagement for next Sunday. Maybe the cars will run over him before Sunday after that. Cars are so crude out West, you know."

Mr. Tompkins was not easily discouraged, however. Deprived of the pleasure of a Sunday

evening visit, he arranged a boating party for the following Friday. Mrs. Holyoke was asked to chaperone it, Bessie was to take Breck Carr again, Mr. Tompkins elected himself to be Margie's escort, and, at Margie's suggestion, invited Fred Shelby to make up the third man of the party.

The lake was one of those "cut-offs" so common along the Missouri. The lazy river, in one of its frequent efforts to shorten its journey to the sea, had cut a new channel across a bend, leaving the old channel scarcely more than a muddy pond. By moonlight, however, it was beautiful.

The boat landing lay half a mile beyond the end of the street-car line. When the party left the car, Mrs. Holyoke took command. She took Fred Shelby, too, and Ella appropriated Breck Carr. This left Mr. Tompkins, in high feather, bringing up the rear with Margie and Bessie.

"I am a thorn between two roses," he said, jocularly, as they set out. Bessie and Margie were too disgusted to answer. Not till they reached the pier did Bessie have an opportunity to express herself.

"If you let Mrs. Holyoke put me in Mr. Tompkins' boat," she said to Margie, "I'll chuck him overboard and hold his head under water. I want a chance to say something to Breck Carr."

"Maybe we'll all be in the same boat," whispered Margie.

This was not to be. Mrs. Holyoke took Bessie and Breck in one boat, and Margie went in another with Ella and Mr. Tompkins and Fred. As guest of honor, she sat in the bow, and as Ella insisted on having one of the two pairs of oars, Fred was put in the stern to steer. Mr. Tompkins and Ella enjoyed themselves immensely. Fred whistled morosely, and Margie raged. In the other boat Mrs. Holyoke monopolized the conversation. It was a most painful evening for Margie and Bessie.

When they returned to the pier Bessie gave Margie a vicious pinch.

"Do something to get Mrs. Holyoke away from Breck or I'll kill you," she said. "Make her go home with you and Mr. Tompkins."

She gave Margie a push. A brilliant idea occurred to Margie. She sat down suddenly.

"Oh," she said, "I've turned my ankle."

The attentive Mr. Tompkins sprang at once to her assistance, and lifted her to her feet.

"It isn't very bad," she said. "I can walk, I think, if I have somebody to lean on."

"Lean on me," said Mr. Tompkins.

Margie limped a few steps, leaning on Mr. Tompkins' arm. Then she reached a hand to Mrs. Holyoke's shoulder.

"I'm afraid I'll need two people," she said.

"Let me help," said Fred, eagerly, offering his arm.

"Won't we miss the last car?" asked Bessie. "Hadn't somebody better go on ahead and tell them to wait? They'd wait if they knew somebody was hurt."

"I'm so glad you thought of it, Miss Bessie," said Mrs. Holyoke. "Ella, you and Mr. Carr walk on and tell them to wait."

Margie restrained a giggle at the failure of Bessie's scheme.

"You'd better have my shawl, Margie," Bessie said. "You might take cold."

She laid the shawl about Margie's shoulders.

"Chuckle-head!" she whispered, disgustedly.

"Ouch!" cried Margie.

"Did you turn the foot again?" inquired Mr. Tompkins.

"Oh, no," said Margie, struggling with a laugh. "It doesn't hurt if I don't bear on it too heavily."

She chose the foot nearest Mr. Tompkins as the injured one, and leaned on Mr. Tompkins' arm so heavily that conversation on his part was difficult. He mopped his brow with his free hand from time to time. Margie could not help laughing when she caught sight of the car, with Ella and Breck waiting.

"I just thought of a poem," she explained: "Two stern-faced men set out from Lynne,' you

know, 'and Eugene Aram walked between with gyves upon his wrist.' "

"I see," said Mr. Tompkins. "Gyves, I fancy, though, did not mean merely retaining hands. It meant handcuffs."

Mr. Tompkins was breathing heavily. He was not athletic, and Margie's weight on his arm was by no means light. Further, the evening was sultry.

He met Margie and Bessie in the street next day. There was no trace of a limp in Margie's walk, and there was meaning in Bessie's grin. Mr. Tompkins was not utterly dense. The acquaintance was not continued, but Mr. Tompkins withdrew with colors flying. He told Ella that in the East careful mothers did not permit girls of sixteen to receive visits from young men, and Ella repeated the saying to Margie and Bessie.

Margie had forgotten her diary and her ambition. When she remembered them again, the good times were only memories. Fred Winthrop had been awfully fond of her. The words were his. And Margie had said that she liked him ever and ever so much. Love was a word neither spoke, but Fred kissed her once. It was an affection that belonged wholly to being sixteen. Margie never thought to analyze it nor to write about it. Fred was simply Fred. They belonged to each other, but Margie never thought of the

future. She scarcely thought of herself at all. Living was so pleasant that there was nothing to think about. She was perfectly happy.

Fred always came to see her on Sunday evenings, and they walked over to Bessie's. One Sunday evening Fred did not come, nor the next. There was no spoken understanding between them. Margie did not dream of writing to him to ask an explanation. The third Sunday she went over to Bessie's with somebody else. Fred came in later. He was there when someone asked Bessie to sing. Bessie's favorite song was about "You never come to see me now," and each verse ended, "Won't you tell me why?" Margie played her accompaniment. Margie had never had a music lesson, but Betty had told her how to read music when she was no more than seven. She read rapidly, but read music as she read books, skipping whatever was dull or difficult. She did not read quite like other people. She had no idea, unless she stopped to count up, which note was for B or G. The score looked to her like the keyboard, and she played what she saw. Her accompaniments were easy to sing to. But she played "Won't you tell me why?" that day very fast, and said it was a silly song. Afterward Fred looked as if he were going to ask to walk home with her, but he saw that she had already some one to take her home. Margie never saw him again.

Early in the autumn Mr. Carlin made another move. This time he went to Centropolis, one of the largest cities in the Northwest, to be an editorial writer on the *Sentinel*. Margie hated knowing about money matters, and knew very little of the family plans. She was apathetic about going—apathetic about everything. She had sat by her window upstairs so many Sunday evenings, hoping Fred would come. At seven she was sure he was coming, and hurried to put on the frock he liked best. At half-past seven every step that drew near made her stop breathing for an instant. At a quarter past eight her hands felt cold. At eight-thirty—surely that was somebody turning in the gate—no, and after half-past eight it is too late to expect anybody. Things seemed dull to Margie, but she did not quite know why. She knew by and bye that Fred had gone West. She opened her diary then, but she never wrote Fred's name. She wrote merely a plain account of her everyday doings.

"We are going to Centropolis," she wrote. "I don't belong anywhere, now, and I think I'd like to see new faces. I want to learn to be a writer. I want to make something of myself."

A little later she wrote:

"I think I have never been very happy. So many things have disappointed me. Life is rather a failure. I shall be glad when I am old."

A day or two before she went away she packed away in a little doll's trunk which held her treasures—Julia's letters, her diary, the things she had written, some new souvenirs. There was a paper fan Fred had written his name on, a newspaper he had held and turned in his hands all one evening, a dance programme with his name on it twice. She had no picture of him. She did not know where he was, but she kept the fan longer than she kept Julia's letters.

It was a long time before she talked about Fred to herself. She liked to look out at the stars at night, but she did not separate the thought of Fred from the general dreariness of life. She wanted to write so that Fred would see her name. And the first verses that were printed—not by any means the first she sent to editors—were about the fan.

“You wrote your name across my fan,
One August day, with jest and laughter,
Across its scenes of far Japan,
Its white and gold, with careless hand,
You wrote your name across my fan.

“You wrote your name, as on my fan,
For all the years that should come after,
In those brief days of summer's span,
Across my life, with careless hand,
You wrote your name, as on my fan.”

She did not consider whether the poem was good or not. It was very easy to write. She wanted Fred to see it.

It was about this time, too, that she began really to write letters to Major Winchester, in Gordonsville. She had sent him little notes from time to time, thanking him for the gifts he sent her, but now she began to write to him as she wrote in her diary. He was a man who had traveled and studied and suffered and fought. An old bachelor, and Margie scarcely remembered how he looked. Major Winchester never minded what one said. In answer to a letter in which she had expressed correct sentiments on every subject she could think of, he wrote:

“I reckon you were born right, but don’t you rebel at something, hate something terribly, want something awfully that you can’t have? For me, I am not at all satisfied. Friendship is too fine a thing to find, and God too far away to be company. This world is unsatisfying and the next uncertain. Tell me what you are. Tell the things you say when you talk to yourself. What we say to ourselves is the most valuable conversation we can have in this world, or in any world. What we say to ourselves, the vast oversoul in which we live and move and have our being, tells us everything if we have only ears to hear.

“You say you would like to see the mountains. Why, you will never see anything more sublime than what you see every day. Behold the blue dome, the stars, the sun and moon, night and morning, the prairie. I saw the sun rise out of the prairie which we call the ocean many a morning. God, and me to see Him, it lies in my memory.

“When you have done your level best—not what some one tells you, but what you think, then comfort and content will come in your soul. What each of us individually thinks is right, is right. There is no higher law. All ethics, and religion and sentiment, reverence and devotion are included in this, all-souled submission to what we think is right. Don’t surrender. Keep an almighty and magnificent will of your own. God is all-splendor, energy and decision. We belong to Him. He belongs to us. Without us, He can do nothing. Without Him, we can do nothing.”

Margie told him what she was. She did not tell one side of a story as she did in her diary. She was as honest with Major Winchester as with herself. He was the only person to whom she spoke about Fred.

“You have been hit,” he wrote. “Well, it can’t be helped. Put the cry into stories. Applause, fame, success are something one must

have. You have capital laid up. So much is sure. Nevertheless, it is a very serious matter. The cry is in everybody's heart, my dear. Robert Ingersoll dedicates a volume to his brother, from whom he heard the first applause. And even Christ—I doubt if He would have made His work had it not been for His disciples who loved to hear His stories. The unconscious, subtle flattery of those we like is necessary to our growth.

"It is the anniversary of the death of my dog Brickm, ten years ago. You could not know him if I wrote forever. The regard of a dog for his master is something fine beyond philosophy, and curious. He does not work, he only plays, and some one must work to find him in food, but one look from his trusting soul repays that debt.

"Tell me your ideal of a man if you dare. Who's afraid? And I will tell you what a woman is, if she only knew it. Take the hit, take it. Take the cry. Afterward go out and fight."

It was Major Winchester who helped her to learn to live, as he had helped her to learn to count. The thought of Fred—or the feeling, for it was scarcely a conscious thought—did not make her sorry for herself, as her other troubles had done. It was not Fred who had struck her, it was the world.

"I'm going to strike back now, God," she said.
"I'm going to be somebody."

She had little personal regret at leaving Bessie. The good times were spoiled now. She must get even with the world, but she never blamed Fred.

CHAPTER XV.

GLEND A.

CENTROPOLIS was a great deal larger than any of the other places in which Margie had lived. It was too large a city ever to feel well acquainted or really lonely in. Margie did not look forward to forming any intimate friendships. She no longer felt the need of bosom friends, and liked to be alone. She had lost the impulse to take root deeply. She felt herself merely a transient guest in Centropolis, and the lives that other girls led scarcely attracted her now. She wanted freedom to do something, be somebody. She saw no reason why being a woman should hamper her choice of a future, since she intended never to marry, and never to care for any Fred or any Julia to such a degree that she might be hit again. She saw that the only way to free herself from the numb misery she suffered was to think of something else—find something to do. She had luxuriated in grief over Julia. She could not bear to indulge her grief over Fred. She was afraid to face it.

Her ambition now became more definite. She was newspaper-struck, as she might have been stage-struck. The calling of editor loomed before her great and romantic and heroic. Every one connected with a newspaper was exalted. She had dreams of a career beyond newspaper work—born in the craft she never said journalism—but these were of being editor of a magazine as Thackeray had been of the *Cornhill*. She had no wish to write books, being impatient of the labor involved. Short stories were the utmost she attempted.

At her father's suggestion, she began to write paragraphs for "The Man on the Corner" column of the *Sunday Sentinel*. Mr. Carlin was supposed to write this department, but it was a little out of his line. It was delightful and painful to Margie to write paragraphs for her father. Whatever was good he accepted without a word of praise. Whatever failed to please him he criticised mercilessly. He was a purist in English, and conceived paragraph writing to be an art by itself. In the telling of a little incident, one must begin with a line hinting at the general idea of the story, work up to the point, and stop immediately after that. The very last word of all should be the most important in the whole thing, and sentences must be crisp, with no large words used where short ones would serve as well. He detested "fine" writing.

Margie and Betty went with him to the theatre once a week, and school and her ambition took up the rest of her time.

The first Monday after her arrival she started to school. The High School had a business-like air. She looked up at its windows and said:

"Just you wait. I'm going to be somebody here."

She did not feel embarrassed at the thought of being a stranger among so many boys and girls. They were mere shadows to her. She had decided what words to say to the principal. She was always a little unready and embarrassed in speech, and she had learned that the only way to overcome this was to formulate each sentence before she spoke it.

She found Mr. Harmon in his office, and the friendly look of his gentle, scholarly face made her so much at ease that she explained quite freely what she wanted to study. She had attended High School six weeks that autumn in Nebraska, and was ready to go on with the Junior Class. The course in Centropolis was largely elective. She chose Latin and English history, and physics and composition and drawing. Instead of geometry, she asked to be allowed to take cooking.

"I don't like mathematics," she said frankly. "I'd rather take two other things than anything that has to do with calculations."

"Have you any reason beside dislike of mathematics for taking something else?" Mr. Harmon asked.

"Yes, sir," she answered. "I want to be a writer. Mathematics will be of no use in the world to me. If it's to be just a training of my mind, I'd rather train it with something else."

She was allowed, after some discussion, to drop mathematics, and in all the rest of her High School course she never took it up again. Mr. Harmon was called away, presently, and left her in his office. A girl who had been reading in a corner, the only other occupant in the room, at once came over and spoke. She was a striking-looking girl, dark, heavy-browed, with an expression almost morose. Her eyes, however, twinkled. When she spoke her voice was deep and serious.

"You are new," she said. "I don't see any sense in standing on ceremony. What is your name?"

"Margaret Carlin."

"I'm Glenda Woodhouse. I liked what you said about mathematics. I'm going to take cooking myself. You'll never see a truncated cone when you get out of school, but you'll be hungry three times a day."

Margie smiled at that. Here certainly was a girl who was queer and didn't mind it at all.

"Where do you live?" Glenda asked.

"In Marshall avenue."

"Why do you say 'in'?" Glenda demanded. "I can't see any sense in not saying 'on.' Saying 'in' sounds as if you lived in a hole. I live on Farrington. That's the next street to Marshall."

"What makes you say 'on'?" retorted Margie, immensely amused. "It sounds as if you lived outdoors, smack dab, on the pavement."

"I can't see that at all," said Glenda. "But I'm glad you live on the hill. All the best people do."

"Why is that?" asked Margie.

"The drainage is better, I suppose," Glenda answered. "It's the only reason I can see. Well, I have to go back now and find out who Queen Philippa was. Do you know?"

"Not exactly."

"I don't know and I don't care, but I've got to find out. I don't see any sense in knowing about a lot of people who are dead."

Without doubt, Glenda was queer. Margie soon discovered that she was popular in spite of her queerness. There were a great many things she saw no sense in, and she never hesitated to say so. Sometimes Margie agreed with her.

The next day Margie's lessons began. The whole school, more than three hundred boys and girls, gathered in the Assembly Hall at half-past eight. It was large enough to hold twice their number. Back of the principal's platform, at

one end of the room, was a fully equipped stage, and on the walls of the hall hung the banners of ten different classes. They were huge affairs of velvet, or plush, in the class colors, with mottoes on them. At the right of the stage hung the Senior banner, at the left the Junior. This was the banner of Margie's class. It was a dark-green velvet, with the motto, "Palma non sine pulvere," in pale green, edged with silver. Below the motto was '90 in silver. '91 and '92 had their banners on the south wall, and on the north and over the entrance doors hung the banners of classes already graduated. Class spirit was strong in Centropolis. Each class had its president, vice-president and secretary, and held meetings.

The song that first morning was "Hail, Smiling Morn!" Glenda said she couldn't see any sense in singing that on a rainy day, but she joined in with a strong and sweet alto, which Margie imitated as best she could, reading fairly correctly from the book they had.

After the principal's brief speech, they went away to the Latin room. Margie always liked teachers who taught Latin, and Professor Brown was plainly a scholar. He was called "Papa" Brown, possibly because no other nickname would have fitted his quiet, cold personality so ill. The class began that day Cicero's first oration against Catiline. Margie had read it in the

six weeks in Nebraska, but it did not come first in the Centropolis course.

The girls and boys called on, rose and translated. Professor Brown addressed the girls as Miss This or That, and the boys by their surnames alone. After a little he called on Miss Carlin.

"I have not prepared the lesson, Professor," Margie said.

"Very well, then. You may read the text, and then try what you can do at sight-reading."

Margie rose. The scene was plain to her. Cicero, standing toga-draped in the Senate, hurling those splendid words at Catiline, who seemed to her to be huddled in his seat quite alone. She read with enthusiasm:

"*O di immortales! Ubinam gentium sumus? In quo urbe vivimus? Quam rem publicam habemus? Hic, hic sunt in nostro numero, patres conscripti, in hoc orbis terræ sanctissimo gravissimoque consilio, qui de nostro omnium interitu qui de—*"

A chorus of snickers stopped her. What was wrong with her reading? Was this the way they treated a stranger in Centropolis? She felt as if she had been stung by a lash. Laughed at!

"We use the Continental pronunciation," Professor Brown explained. "I see you have been used to the English. Now, let us see what you can do with sight-reading."

"Just you wait, you grinning boys, just you wait. I may pronounce in a funny way, but you'll stop grinning when I translate." Margie began. She construed as nobody had ever done before at sight. It was not sight-reading for her, but no matter. She was able to hit back.

"Immortal gods! where in the world are we? In what city are we living? What kind of state have we? Conscript fathers, here in our midst, here in this most august and eminent assembly of the whole world there are men who are plotting the destruction of us all, the ruin of the city, the ruin even of the world. I, the consul, see these men, and I demand their intention regarding public affairs. I do not yet wound even by words the men who merit butchery by the sword."

"Excellent! Excellent!" said Professor Brown. "Not only the sense of the Latin, but an excellent English rendering. A free rendering as sight-reading should be."

Margie sat down quivering with triumph. Already she had struck one blow back.

After the lesson, Glenda made her characteristic comment:

"I don't see any sense in the Continental pronunciation," she said. "The English sounds a lot better. Why do we say 'Sissero' out of class and Kikero in class? I think it's foolish."

Margie's next lesson was in physics. The

class recited in the laboratory in the basement. It was the same book she had studied half through in Adams City, but whereas in Adams City one skipped the listed experiments at the foot of the page, in Centropolis one had to do them all and record them on blanks. One was to tell what one did, and what one concluded from what one observed.

Margie had dozens of experiments to make up, and she detested working with apparatus. She could see no reason why one should make experiments to prove what somebody had already proved and set down in the book. Making up those experiments out of school, she wrote most of them from consultation with the text-book. Those that required actual use of apparatus she seldom worked out successfully. She spent all one afternoon melting ice in the attempt to learn how many calories its reduction to water required, and never made her result tally with the book. In the end she set down what the book said. Glenda, in a similar case, would have contended that the book was wrong.

Glenda had no respect for theories. What was the sense of the Law of Inertia, anyway? Why should one say that an object set in motion would go on moving forever unless something stopped it? Didn't gravity and friction and a lot of other things always stop it? Glenda frequently interrupted the progress of a recita-

tion to argue in this way, and she was not to be convinced. She was a natural doubter. It was a trait that sometimes led to disaster. She and Margie together one day undertook to distill inky water. They made their still carefully after the directions. The inky water boiled merrily over the spirit lamp, and the steam began to pass through the connecting tube to liquefy in the other flask. The process was too slow to satisfy Glenda.

"I think it would do better if we let a lot of steam collect in the ink bottle and then let it out all at once. It stands to reason that the more steam we have the quicker it will turn to water."

Margie had no ideas on the subject. She preferred to do just what the book said.

"I'm going to hold the steam in a while," Glenda said. She pinched the rubber tube just above the flask of inky water. Instantly something blew up. The ink spattered over Glenda, but she was unmoved.

"I see that I was wrong," she said. "You must let the steam escape slowly."

Margie sat down and laughed till she ached. The calm, serious expression of Glenda under her ink was too much for her.

There was another day when Glenda's spirit of doubt led her to grief. She and Margie were experimenting with electricity. They set the small dynamo going and watched the spark leap

across when they held the poles a little distance apart. The book spoke of certain things as being non-conductors of electricity. It spoke, too, of the effect of electricity on muscles. Glenda was unconvinced.

"Suppose I put one of these wires on each side of my tongue. Do you suppose I'd feel any current?"

"I think you would," said Margie.

"I don't believe it," said Glenda. "I think the current would just go on through my tongue and I wouldn't feel it."

She applied her tongue to the gap between the poles. For an instant her eyes seemed to be about to pop out of her head. Then she stood up and began to rub her tongue.

"It was almost jerked out by the roots," she explained when she could talk again. "But I didn't taste anything, as Professor Williams said. He is wrong about that. I'm going to tell him so!"

Examinations were a positive grief to Glenda. It was not possible then to argue. You had merely to write answers to the questions that were set down on the blackboard, whether you thought they were sensible questions or not. Glenda always looked more sombre than ever on examination day. She did not see why answering ten questions twice a term should be important. You might answer them all cor-

rectly or miss them all, and in neither case would the result indicate what you knew. It took her a long time to complete an examination paper. Margie, on the other hand, was always the first of the class to finish. She had discovered a certain odd quality of the mind. In playing anything on the piano she had discovered that if she watched her fingers and thought about what was coming next, she could never play the piece through. Left to themselves, and unhampered by her attention, her fingers remembered and played. This was true of her mind also. She merely read off the examination questions and let her mind answer them. If she stopped to think, she was never certain that any answer was right. Gradually she came to have a dim conception of something she called her sub-self, and relied on it, as on another individuality. If father wanted paragraphs, it was useless and hampering to think what to write. The thing to do was to sit down and wait till the sub-self began to write. If you were called on in school to recite a poem, you might be unable to recall a line of it as you walked to the platform. But you needn't worry. All you had to do was to think of nothing, and your sub-self would recite. She learned to rely implicitly on that sub-self. It could do things she was utterly unable to do. She had a vague superstition that if she doubted it she would fail. She talked to it as "you." It

helped her most in writing and in reciting things. Some of the things she wrote; all of them that were good came to her. And she never failed to repeat correctly any poem, or speech of her own, she had committed to memory. She trusted to her sub-self to bring her success, and admired it.

Glenda was her nearest friend, but there was no intimacy between them. They called each other by their first names, and visited each other occasionally. A few other girls called Margie by her first name, but she seldom saw them out of school. The ladylike young girl who lived next door, and did not go to school, called on her and asked her to join a guild in the church. Margie attended one or two meetings and then dropped out. The ladylike girl was tiresome. Margie meant to have a future unlike an average girl's future, and she no longer cared whether she was like other girls or not. They did not interest her. She was less introspective than ever before, and she felt old.

"I shall never let myself care again," she said to herself. "People can care for me if they want to, but I won't run the risk of being made unhappy."

CHAPTER XVI.

A POINT OF ORDER.

DEBATING societies were an important feature of the Centropolis High School. There was a general society whose meetings everybody was expected to attend, and almost every one belonged to one of the four smaller societies, the Brilliant, the Utile Dulce, the Philomathean, and the Athenian.

The Brilliants had a rising sun, in hammered brass, on the door of the class-room in which they met, and were grudgingly admitted to be the best debaters in school. Glenda was an Utile Dulce, and Margie joined that society. She had debated once in Adams City, but there was no debating society there, and no attention paid to parliamentary usage. In Centropolis Roberts' "Rules of Order" were consulted as often as any text-book. Margie found herself out of things at the very first meeting of the Utile Dulces. Somebody called for the previous question while Glenda was arguing against accepting a challenge to join debate from

the Athenians, and Glenda refused to be downed by the chair's decision, that the call admitted of no debate. Margie could not see why you could stop anybody in that way. It seemed an unjust advantage for the many to take of the individual. It was a sort of denial of the right of free speech, but when, in spite of Glenda's protest, the question was put to vote, she began to understand that to hold one's own in the society, one must know the rules. She borrowed a copy of Roberts' and set herself to learn. Knowing exactly what to do gave her confidence.

There was a debate in each society once a fortnight, and in the General Society, which met in the Assembly Hall, once a month, unless a joint debate between the two societies took the place of this. Margie longed to debate, but scarcely dared at first. She might make a failure of it.

The debate between the Athenians and the Utile Dulces was on the question, "Resolved, That the Romans were a greater nation than the Greeks." The Utile Dulces had the negative. There were two speakers from each society for leaders, and any four who chose might speak in the after-debate. Margie prepared a speech, but said nothing about it, for she was not at all sure she would be able to get up and speak when the time came. The leader on each side was a Senior boy, and she felt that Seniors were immensely older and more learned than Juniors. And if

her prepared speech did not fit in, she was very doubtful of her ability to speak extemporaneously. It would be hideous to stand up before the whole school stammering and hesitating for a word, obliged, possibly, in the end to sit down in shameful defeat. Few of the girls, none, in fact, but Senior girls, cared or dared to take part in joint debates. They spoke in the little debates in the societies to which they belonged. Some of them thought it almost trying to be like boys if one talked in debates in the Assembly Halls.

It was a serious affair, that debate about the Greeks and the Romans. The first speaker for the affirmative began crushingly. It astonished him that anyone could for a moment consider that the Greeks were great. Anyone who did think so was surely very badly informed. One had to read only a little history to find out how little the Greeks amounted to. The Romans had conquered them—conquered all the world. “To be a Roman was greater than a King,” he quoted. “Rome sat on her seven hills and from her throne of beauty ruled the world. Cæsar had been the greatest military genius the world had ever seen.” He had conquered the Gauls and the Teutons and the Britons. Latin languages were spoken to-day by more people than Greek was. For ten minutes he stormed on, and sat down amid great applause.

The first speaker for the negative was aston-

ished that any one could consider the Romans great. They borrowed their gods from the Greeks. The Greeks, too, were great warriors. Alexander conquered the world. Homer, the greatest poet, was a Greek. The Greeks were law-givers and philosophers beside. One had only to read history to find out how much greater the Greeks were than the Romans. Nobody who read history at all could fail to be convinced.

Margie sat through the speeches of the four leaders, her hands cold with excitement. If only she could stand up as those Seniors did and speak so firmly and freely. And yet how few telling points they seemed to make. The result would be decided by vote of the school. The lower two classes were large. Their votes really decided a matter. What did they know of the learned things the Seniors talked about?

The negative side fared badly. The girl leader was frightened, and read her speech in a low voice. All the other leaders read, too. This struck Margie as a mistake. The after-debate would go better, because then there would be no papers to hamper them. The first speaker in the after-debate made the one point that Latin was the language of scholars in the Dark Ages. The next speaker for the negative was a Senior girl who forgot what she intended to say. The second speaker for the affirmative dwelt on the excellence of Roman roads. Now was the time

for the negative to produce an after-debate speaker. It was their last chance. The Utile Dulces, sitting together on one side of the hall, looked dispirited. Margie seemed glued to her chair. She found herself saying, "One for the money, two for the show, three to make ready, and four"—she took the plunge. She had a moment of panic when she found herself standing. Her knees shook, and she clutched the back of the bench.

"Mr. President," she began, wishing she had not risen.

"Louder!" called a Brilliant.

"I want to say that I—that I do not agree with the—with the—" Her voice sounded husky to her. Her mouth was dry.

"Louder!" cried a Brilliant again.

Margie found her voice.

"There spoke the Roman!" she cried. "Louder was always the cry of the people who produced a Pontius Pilate and a Nero. Louder, to drown the cries of the people they oppressed! Louder, louder, loud as a drum, noisy outside and empty inside."

The Utile Dulces clapped at this. Margie was perfectly at ease now, though her knees still went on shaking.

"What does being great mean?" she said. "Rome was great, like a balloon. Greece was great, like a rock. Latin was the language of the

Dark Ages. It was not until the world stopped speaking it that the Dark Ages were over. In what language was the New Testament written, Latin or Greek? Greek, of course. Greece, therefore, gave Christianity to the world. Pontius Pilate and Nero—can a Christian world call their nation great? What do we say of a person who is brave? Do we say Roman? No, we say Spartan. That's Greek. If killing and enslaving people is great, then Rome was great. If leaving beautiful and enlightening things after them is great, then the Greeks were certainly better than the Romans. The Greeks taught the world philosophy and art. The Romans merely went out and killed. (Applause.) The real test of the greatness of these two nations is the impression they have left on the world. All the world reveres the Greeks. You must admit that they were greater than the Romans when you think of one thing—Which nation produced the nose we admire most? This is the whole question. If you admit that the straight Greek nose is the most beautiful, you must admit the Greeks were greater than the Romans. If you admire the beak-like proboscis, the hideous Roman nose, call the Romans great. Pontius Pilate had a Roman nose."

The smaller boys and girls in the lower classes broke out into laughter and applause. Margie sat down trembling. She was not quite sure what

she had said, but she had not been afraid. She knew it was not argument, but people applauded. Pontius Pilate's nose won the day.

Margie could scarcely control her trembling while the vote was taken. After she knew the negative had won, and Glenda said her speech did it, she seemed to float on air. She felt a sense of power. It was not hard to speak if you thought quickly and spoke slowly. Looking the people you wanted to sway square in the eye seemed to compel them to agree with you. All you needed in order to debate was confidence in yourself. Nobody ever won who looked scared.

She asked Glenda if she had looked afraid.

"My, no," said Glenda. "You looked as if you owned the place. But I didn't see much sense to what you said. How do you know Pontius Pilate had a Roman nose?"

Margie didn't know. She knew merely that a short, easy sentence went home better than a long one. Her father had taught her that.

The Utile Dulces having won a debate became popular. First-year and second-year boys and girls wanted to join. It was Margie's ambition now to make the Utile Dulces win every time. Nobody who wouldn't be a help ought to be admitted. Few girls cared to debate, but all the boys did. Keep the girls out, then.

It was the custom to regard admission to any

of the societies as a privilege, not a right. It was not the correct thing for a first or second-year pupil to ask to be admitted. The first-year pupils were called *Fourths*; the second, *Thirds*. Only after two years of High School did one take the college-sounding title of *Junior*. Usually, if a *Fourth* showed any ability, he would be asked to join a society toward the end of a year. The *Utile Dulces* were exclusive. They chose members who were considered clever. They voted on their names, and then extended invitations. The ballot was secret, and one black ball barred a candidate out.

Margie now became active in society meetings. She spoke at every opportunity, and held to the strictest parliamentary usage. Near Christmas, proposed members were voted on. In the list was the name of a *Fourth*—Clara Holcomb. Margie knew nothing of her except that she had broken down in the midst of reciting a poem in Assembly Hall. She was timid and had a weak voice. She was not a desirable addition to the *Utile Dulces*. Margie and Glenda black-balled her.

A few days later a notice was written on the black-board of Miss Marshall's room. The Seniors sat in Miss Marshall's room, and the Juniors went there to recite history. The *Utile Dulces* were requested to meet there after school that day. It was whispered that Miss Marshall

had something to say. Margie came in a little late. The meeting had been called to order, and Miss Marshall was about to address the society. Margie sat down near the back of the room. She was not especially fond of Miss Marshall, who had an idea of forming the characters of her pupils. She expected them to take her point of view of history. Margie had already crossed swords with her over Bloody Queen Mary. Elizabeth, Margie thought, equally deserved the stigma of such a term.

"I have called you together," said Miss Marshall, "to present a matter to you."

This roused Margie's antagonism instantly. Nobody but the president of the society had the slightest right to call the Utile Dulces together.

"At your last election of members," Miss Marshall went on, "the name of Clara Holcomb was presented, and two of your members black-balled her. It is very hard that poor Clara should be wounded. It was cruel to hurt the feelings of a girl who cannot help the fact that her father is in prison in another State. You ought all try to be charitable and kind—do your best to make up to the poor girl for her shame and humiliation. I am sorry to have to speak in this way, for there were only two of you who showed prejudice against her. I hope you will see the necessity of reconsidering the matter. That is all."

Margie sat in her seat boiling with rage. She had never heard anything about Clara Holcomb's father, and it would not have made the slightest difference with her if she had known, in or out of school. If people were well bred in themselves and interesting, she cared nothing whatever for their families, though well-bred people naturally had well-bred parents. She did not believe that many of the girls knew about Clara's father. It seemed indecent of Miss Marshall to make the thing public. Further, Miss Marshall had no business to tell the Utile Dulces what they ought to do. If some Utile Dulce had not violated the oath to keep the proceedings of executive sessions secret, Miss Marshall would never have known. Somebody was a traitor. She got to her feet.

"Since the secrets of this society are public property," she said, "I suppose it is known who black-balled Miss Holcomb. I was one of the two, and Gl—— somebody else was the other."

"Me," said Glenda.

"She was not black-balled on account of her father, for I never heard a word about him till now. This is not a charitable society. It is a debating society. I black-balled her because I didn't think she could debate."

"She feels very bitterly about it," said Miss Marshall.

"That isn't my fault," said Margie. "It is

the fault of the person who tattled. It is a rule of our society that people mustn't be asked to join till we've voted on them, just so they won't get their feelings hurt. We can't help it if there are tattle-tales in the society."

Margie was now at white heat. She did not care if Miss Marshall was the teacher. She would fight the thing out to the end.

"But you will reconsider now that you do know," said Miss Marshall. "I am sure you will withdraw your black-ball. It would be unjust and unkind to keep her out now."

"I shall black-ball anybody who doesn't care to debate," Margie flashed back, taking her seat.

A sense of injustice filled her. She had not been unkind to Clara Holcomb. She had taken it for granted that Clara would not know her name had been discussed. She resented bitterly Miss Marshall's intimation that she meant to be unkind, and, as always when smarting under injustice, she became obstinate.

"I shall appeal to the society, then," said Miss Marshall, hotly. "I am sure the others are not so uncharitable. I want all those who want the black-balling repealed to hold up——"

Margie sprang to her feet.

"Mr. President," she cried, "I rise to a point of order. Non-members of this society, while they may speak before us, are not privileged to put any question to the house, nor to take part

in any way in our deliberations. The person now speaking is out of order."

"I want to find out what the society thinks," said Miss Marshall, hotly. "If Miss Carlin—"

"Mr. President," said Margie, drowning out Miss Marshall's words with her rather heavy voice, "I am speaking to a point of order and have the floor. There is no motion before the house. If the sense of the house on any question is to be taken, a motion must be put. Otherwise, we are all out of order."

Marcia Duncan, whom Margie felt sure had been the tattle-tale, rose.

"Mr. President," she said, "I move that the question of black-balling Miss Holcomb be reconsidered."

"I second the motion," cried somebody else. The motion was put and carried.

"Now, where are we, Mr. President?" asked Glenda. "It seems to me that the matter stands just where it did when Miss Holcomb's name was first submitted."

"The chair thinks it does," said the President, who was a Senior girl.

"Then, if we are to vote on the name, I move we do now go into executive session, as our by-laws provide that no outsider shall be present at the election of members," said Margie.

"I second the motion," said Glenda.

No debate being possible on this question, the motion was put and carried. Miss Marshall withdrew, very much ruffled. She said something vaguely about going to the principal. Miss Holcomb's name was offered again. Glenda weakened, but Margie held out. Miss Holcomb was black-balled again. Margie took care to say to Glenda, in Marcia Duncan's hearing, as they went out:

"It's a pity we can't expel tattle-tales."

That night she was troubled about poor Clara, remembering Ione, and Ione's father. Yet it seemed to her indelicate and unkind to treat Clara in any way that savored of pity. To be pitied in one's humiliation was the one intolerable thing in life. She was sorry about the whole thing, but convinced that she had been right. Miss Marshall had no business to interfere, and Marcia Duncan ought not to have tattled. Neither of them, she was glad to know, had power to down her in the matter. She was so uncomfortable about the whole thing that she felt she must find some way out of it, but at first no way presented itself. She could not help seeing how Clara Holcomb must feel about it.

During the Christmas holidays she met Clara in the street. They had never been acquaintances, but Margie stopped and spoke.

"I want to have a talk with you," she said.

"You're a mean thing," Clara cried. "I don't want to speak to you."

Clara was a Fourth, and naturally one was not embarrassed before a Fourth.

"I know you think I'm mean," she said. "Marcia Duncan told you I black-balled you, didn't she?"

"Yes," said Clara, "and you did it. She came and asked me if I wanted to belong. I never thought of it before. It was hateful of you."

"I black-balled you, but you don't know why. It——" Margie began.

"Marcia Duncan told me," said Clara, her eyes filling with tears. "Marcia said you knew. I didn't think any of the girls knew except her. She came from the same town we did."

"I didn't know," said Margie. "It wouldn't have made any difference if I had known. Nobody cares about anybody's father in school. All in the world I objected to was that I thought you couldn't speak well in debates."

"Well, I can't. I get scared," said Clara. "But I thought——"

"How could you think? I'm a stranger here. I don't know anything about any of the girls' fathers, and I don't care. I can see you—well, you are a lady. Lots of the girls aren't. Marcia Duncan is a sneak. I'll get even with her."

A new thought struck Margie just then.

"Couldn't you learn not to be scared?" she asked.

"I don't know," said Clara. "I might if I had something I liked to speak. That poetry I failed on was so silly."

"Do you have to do any essays?" Margie asked.

"Yes," said Clara; "I've got to read one on Lincoln's birthday. The class elected me, you know. I'm class secretary." She spoke with pitiful pride. "Somebody from each class has to do something. But I know I'll get scared, because I can't write."

"Would you get scared if I wrote you an essay?" Margie asked.

"No," said Clara. "Would you do it?"

"Yes," said Margie. "I like to write. If you commit it to memory and say it off without getting scared I'll vote for you in the Utile Dulce, but you'll have to debate when you get in."

"I will if you'll tell me what to say."

The essay was written. Clara came to Margie's house and repeated it again and again. She could speak loud, too, when Margie insisted. Margie was afraid Glenda would find out, but Clara kept the secret. She did well on Lincoln's birthday. In the list of names handed in anonymously at the first March meeting of the Utile Dulces, Clara Holcomb's name appeared. Nobody black-balled her. Margie's satisfaction at

having done a fine thing was tempered with the feeling that the gratitude of the secretary of the Fourths might come in handy some day. She never believed that any of her actions were really generous. All Glenda said was:

“Well, I’m glad you changed your mind. You see, she really can speak well, and write well, too. I don’t see any sense in judging people the way you do.”

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MARTYRDOM OF CHARLES I.

THERE was one honor to be had in the Centropolis High School that Margie despaired of obtaining. This was the editorship of the school monthly. She had not been a month in school before she began to contribute to the *High School World*. Her first contribution was a poem called "Contentment":

"Contentment is a little pool
That all unruffled lies,
Reflecting back the flight of birds,
And sunny summer skies.

"Unrest, a mountain streamlet is,
With changing pace and strong,
That bears no image but its own
And sings its own free song.

"But quiet waters stagnate soon,
And feel the force the most
Of icy bars the Winter sets,
And fetters of the frost.

"The mountain stream is pure and clear,
And swift its waters flow,
Though iron bars above them lock,
Unfettered on below."

Published, this seemed to convict her of being sentimental, so she set to work to offset it with a paper on Washington, in imitation of Bill Nye. It was, doubtless, flippant, but being one which she had submitted to the teacher of composition the year before in Nebraska, she had no idea that it would displease anyone. The very next month's *World* contained a protest from a Senior against the irreverence of it. It was irreverent, and it was coarse. Margie saw Miss Marshall behind the Senior girl, and the accusation of coarseness rankled. She was not discouraged, however. She had a hopeless hope that the editorship might come to her, and she sent in a serial story to run through three numbers. It was republished later in the patent insides of many country newspapers, with no credit given to the author.

The editorial board was elected in March, and the lower three classes were eligible, in consequence. Margie had been too short a time in school to be elected editor. A position on the staff was all that fell to her. She would gladly have written the whole magazine, yet the mere title of Editor-in-Chief seemed to her to exalt

Florence Hawley, her classmate, who held it. Just being an editor made anybody great, even if one was editor of a mere high school monthly, only. The glamour never left journalism for her. She counted it a day of days when her father introduced her to Miss Flora MacDonald, who wrote such brilliant things on the *Sentinel*. Flora MacDonald seemed to her greater than George Eliot or Harriet Beecher Stowe. Afterward she sent a poem to Miss MacDonald under an assumed name, and it was published in the *Sentinel*. Not even father knew who wrote it. Margie never spoke of poetry to him. He had never written verses in his life.

Once the city editor asked her father to have her report an entertainment at the school. It was the formal opening of the new manual training department, and Glenda had been selected to write and deliver an address. Glenda was deeply interested in manual training, and was the only girl in school who insisted on the right to learn what the boys learned. She joined the carpentering class, turned napkin-rings for all her friends, and built a dog-house. It gave her great satisfaction to be able to drive a nail properly. Her address was written and delivered in the serious spirit in which she did everything. The opening demand of it became a school tradition.

“What shall we do with our boys?” she

asked. "That is the question we must answer frankly. What shall we do with our sons?"

Margie went to the *Sentinel* office after the entertainment and wrote the report at her father's desk. The stir of the place, the noise of the presses on the floor above, the ringing of telephone bells, all added to her sense of being in the very centre of things. When she went with father to the city room to hand in her copy, it was thrilling and painful, too, to see the city editor glance through it. When he had finished he drew a line down one side of each page in blue pencil. Margie's heart stopped beating. It wasn't good enough, but then the editor wadded it into a brass cylinder and sent it up a tube.

"Why did he blue-pencil it if he's going to use it?" she asked her father.

"That's the mark for solid nonpareil," her father explained.

A fire alarm bell rang as they came out. One of the reporters looked up, said, "684—that's the wholesale district," and, seizing his hat, he ran out. What a wonderful, wonderful place a newspaper office was! And she might be there herself some day, if she made herself somebody. Then she could hit back at the world. She never told at school that she had reported the entertainment. It did not seem a thing to tell. She preferred to preserve her incognito, and let

her schoolmates consider her merely one of them.

She joined the girls' double quartette. She had never been quite sure whether she sang or not, but she rather thought she didn't. She could play any tune she knew by ear, and sang duets with Betty, but had a feeling that she did not keep in tune when she sang alone. Glenda had an unusual voice, and Margie, merely echoing it, was accepted as one of the two second altos.

The first time that the double quartette sang in public was at the church funeral of the Superintendent of Schools. Margie had a hysterical desire to giggle during the service. Seen from the choir, the people all looked so funnily solemn. One man among the pall-bearers had on new shoes, and one could see him moving his feet about miserably and ludicrously. The undertaker's gloves were too small, and he tiptoed about in an absurdly important way.

At the end of the service the congregation was bidden to file by the coffin and take a last look at the deceased. Margie was glad the choir was not expected to go. She had a horror of the dead, and a pity for them, too. It was so brutal of the living to look at them and speak of them when they were helpless to defend themselves. When the last of the line had passed, the undertaker and his assistant lifted the coffin lid to lay it in place—a loud cry rang through the church.

The dead man's wife ran forward and flung herself on the body, spreading out her arms to keep the lid away.

Margie leaned forward and hid her face. She had seen the nakedness of a grief stripped in public. The brutality of the thing sickened her. Forever after she hoped that when she came to die she might cover her face at the last moment, and be buried with her face still covered. She had read somewhere of a man who uncovered the deformed foot of the dead Byron. Looking at a dead face seemed exactly like that, for the dead were deformed out of all semblance to the living. They were dead. She kept her face hidden till the church was empty.

She never attended a funeral again with the quartette. Once they were asked to sing at the funeral of a teacher. Margie saw no way to avoid going, but she felt sick at the prospect. On the day of the funeral, however, she woke in the morning with her right eye swollen shut. There seemed no accounting for its condition, but appearing in public with it was clearly out of the question. She did not stay at home, because it was examination day, but she tied a bandage over the eye. After school she went to tell Miss Marshall, who had charge of the music arrangements, that she could not sing with the quartette.

"Let's see the eye," Miss Marshall said.

Margie jerked off the bandage.

"I thought so," said Miss Marshall. "There's nothing in the world wrong with your eye. Why didn't you say plainly you wanted to get out of going?"

"It was swollen shut this morning," Margie declared.

Miss Marshall merely smiled incredulously. Margie walked angrily to the cloak-room and looked in the glass. The swelling had entirely disappeared. She never knew what had been the matter with the eye, but she never forgave Miss Marshall.

"If I had wanted to lie," she said to herself, "I'd have thought up a better excuse than that."

After that she set herself to annoy Miss Marshall in an ingenious way. Glenda was the instrument of revenge. Glenda did not take kindly to the university method of studying history. She preferred to learn from one book, and saw no sense of muddling herself by looking up different authorities. She and Margie prepared their history lesson in the school library. Charles I. and Cromwell were their subjects on the day when Margie started in to torment Miss Marshall. Margie selected the books of reference that suited her purpose best, and read to Glenda. Dickens' account of Charles' death came first.

"Wasn't that a noble death!" she said, hav-

ing carefully warped the text to increase Charles' heroism. "What a brave man he was. The last of the great Kings! 'I have a good cause and a gracious God on my side.' I tell you, Glenda, he was a martyr."

"It does look that way," Glenda said. Glenda was of English descent, and high church.

"Miss Marshall doesn't think so," said Margie. "She doesn't believe in kings and queens, anyway. She thinks England ought to be a republic."

This was a pure invention, and Margie knew it, but that made no difference to her. "Over the left," she said to herself.

"Why, she even admires Cromwell, and Hume says he was a fanatical hypocrite. Why, when Parliament wouldn't do what he wanted, he locked the doors and wouldn't let them do anything. I think he was about the worst tyrant in history. Just read this. Of course, Miss Marshall wouldn't believe it, but then she's a Roundhead, anyway."

Glenda read. Glenda was a person of strong convictions. The beheading of Charles I. became at once a personal grievance to her. She went to class next day determined to exercise her right of free speech. Miss Marshall unwittingly opened the battle with her first question.

"State why the English people rebelled against Charles," she asked Glenda.

"They were led to it by a lot of hypocritical malcontents like Cromwell," said Glenda.

"I don't think one can say that," said Miss Marshall. "Charles was not honest, and he oppressed the people."

"So did Cromwell," said Glenda, "only he was worse. He hadn't the belief of the divine right of kings to make him think the people needed a strong ruler."

"But that belief is an exploded one."

"I don't see how," Glenda answered. "Queen Victoria is temporal head of the church."

"That's scarcely an argument," Miss Marshall said, not wishing to venture on the dangerous ground of religion.

"But it's so," said Glenda.

"That may be, but it doesn't give her divine right."

"I don't see why not. It says on English money, 'Queen by the Grace of God.' "

"Still, you haven't answered my question."

"Yes, I have. I don't think Charles was wrong. Cromwell himself said that no man could enjoy his possessions in peace unless the King had his rights. And after that he turned around and wanted him killed."

"But the King exceeded his rights."

"So did Cromwell. As soon as he got power he wouldn't let Parliament do anything he didn't want done. He wanted to be king himself."

Margie sat back happy. Miss Marshall was growing red in the face.

"I'm afraid you haven't read history correctly," she snapped.

"I read Hume. He calls Cromwell a fanatical hypocrite."

"He was prejudiced."

"I don't see how we can know who was prejudiced. Lots of people call Charles a martyr. He was certainly more consistent than Cromwell."

"Oh, no, not at all."

"I don't see why not. He pretended to be so religious and puritanical, and Dickens says he had gout. And the Encyclopædia says he had a red, swollen face, and didn't wear clean linen."

"Clean linen is not the question," said Miss Marshall. "Cromwell certainly ruled England in the way he thought best."

"So did Charles, and it shows what the people thought of the two when they wanted another king right away after Cromwell died. Anything Cromwell wanted to do he made believe he thought was right."

"So did Charles."

"Yes, but Charles had a right to think a king could rule the people. Cromwell was nothing but a usurper."

"He was no worse than Charles." Miss Marshall was clearly out of patience.

"That's the same as saying they were both bad," said Glenda. "That's what I think. That's what I said at first. They were both tyrants."

"Oh, no, pardon me, but you didn't say that. You said Cromwell was a fanatical hypocrite."

"Well, he was. Hume says so."

Thereupon, the circle being complete, Glenda and Miss Marshall began to go round it again, to the unspeakable satisfaction of Margie. At the end of the recitation period, they were still at it, and as it was impossible to ruffle Glenda, or to lead her into any speech which would deserve a reprimand, and so silence her, the discussion was not a happy one for Miss Marshall. Glenda's last speech was:

"Well, I can't see why we should condemn Charles for doing just what Cromwell did when he got the chance."

Miss Marshall's last answer was:

"But we should take the verdict of competent historians."

And the call-bell interrupted Glenda in the midst of:

"But I can't see how we can find out which historian is competent. They're all——" She meant to add "prejudiced," but the dismissal of the class prevented it.

After that Glenda was called on merely to

mention dates, or other undiscussable things, and Margie rejoiced greatly.

She carried the baiting of Miss Marshall into the cooking class, for no other reason than that Miss Marshall had been responsible for the introduction of cooking in the school. Miss Marshall frequently attended the class.

Three afternoons a week, the girls gathered in a basement room, took notes of the teacher's lecture, and then went to work in pairs at the long tables. Glenda could see no sense in learning to cook by rule. Anybody could cook from directions in a cook-book without learning. What a cooking class ought to teach you was to cook when you had nothing to go by, and nothing to measure things in. You wouldn't have a thermometer to test an oven with at home, and you wouldn't have all the utensils that the school provided. You ought to learn to cook with whatever you happened to have. The eight rules for cake-making fairly incensed Glenda. The first one was:

“Measure all ingredients carefully before beginning.”

The second: “Sift dry ingredients, and combine thoroughly.”

The third: “Cream the butter before adding sugar.”

This third rule set Glenda to arguing. Her mother creamed butter and sugar together.

Teaching Glenda anything was no easy task. She was never in the slightest degree impertinent. She was merely serious, and ready to change her mind if the sense of a thing could be pointed out to her. The pointing was the difficulty. She insisted on cooking in her own way, adding a pinch of salt and a dash of flavoring, instead of a salt-spoonful of the one, and half a teaspoonful of the other. Margie did not like cooking. She was not dextrous in mixing, and she could not use a knife without cutting her hands. Glenda outstripped her at every point, but when it came to examination, Margie was marked 97 and Glenda scarcely passed. Margie knew the rules, and Glenda did not. Glenda could merely cook.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A WAY OUT.

MARGIE had shot up like a weed, till at seventeen she was almost the tallest girl in her class. She was thin and inclined to stoop, and felt herself awkward in the extreme. Her feet made so much noise when she walked, and her arms seemed in her way. When she danced she forgot all this, but at other times she felt uncomfortably conscious of her body and limbs.

There was a teacher of elocution and physical culture in the school, but her speech was sarcastic, and her manner critical. It was possible for Margie to advance only when she felt approval in a teacher. She longed intensely to possess ease of manner, and tried not to feel embarrassed in the teacher's presence, but all to no avail. It happened just then that a former acquaintance of Mrs. Carlin, who lived in St. Anthony, decided to open a studio for the teaching of physical culture and expression in Centropolis. She came to Mrs. Carlin and proposed a very agreeable arrange-

ment. She would come to Centropolis twice a week, see to her classes, and spend the night with the Carlins. In exchange for this, in order that she might feel under no obligations, she said Betty and Margie were to join one of her classes. Margie was delighted. Mrs. Morgan was always perfectly at ease, and she herself never lost her self-consciousness except in the excitement of a debate. She fancied that if she knew exactly what to do with her hands and feet they would annoy her less, for she had discovered that knowing what to say made her at ease in speaking.

Mrs. Morgan was so kind and approachable that it seemed easy to learn from her. One of the first things she said Margie never forgot.

“We begin,” she said, “with the grace of unconsciousness. All little children are graceful. After this, there are three stages of development. The awkwardness of ignorance, the awkwardness of self-conscious knowledge, and the grace of ingrained, unconscious knowledge.”

Margie instantly applied this. She knew that she felt awkward when she sat down and when she rose. It was because she did not know how to do it. She asked Mrs. Morgan to show her how.

“Put one foot a little farther back than the other,” Mrs. Morgan said. “Rest your weight on it, and sit down with the body erect. Rise in

the same way without bending at the waist. Stand with your weight forward, and walk as tall as you can."

This was exactly what Margie wanted to know. She determined to practise being graceful. Her mother and Betty never seemed ill at ease. They seemed to know instinctively so many things which she had consciously to learn. She felt that now, knowing what was wrong, and how to remedy it, she could find a way out from under the weight of self-consciousness.

It happened that the very next evening Mrs. Carlin and Betty went to a concert. They were no sooner out of the house than Margie ran up to the room she and Betty occupied, and set to work. With a little tilting, the long glass over the dresser showed her her full figure. She drew a chair in front of it and sat down as she usually did.

"It's true," she said aloud. "I do double up like a jack-knife. I sit down first and find the chair afterward."

She rose and stood, heels together, before the chair. Then, mentally counting "One," she put her right foot back in the first position in dancing. "Two," and she bent her knees a little. "Three," she bent at the hips and seated herself. This certainly effected a better result, but was jerky. She did it again without counting. It went better that way, but she had not asked Mrs.

Morgan what to do with her arms. She had kept them folded, and jerked herself out of the chair with them. Graceful women never sat with folded arms.

"I'll let them dangle," she said to herself. This brought them stiffly to her sides. Clearly, it would not do. "I'll relax them and draw them up a little," she thought.

This was better. Her hands fell carelessly in her lap. The whole thing seemed to her ridiculous, but she kept on.

"I will find out how people do to feel at ease even if it is silly," she said.

She rose and sat, and sat and rose till every muscle ached, but she learned in the end just how the thing ought to be done to look best in the glass. It was going to be a great comfort to her, she felt, to lose self-consciousness. She tried greeting a stranger, too. She had always known that in her own home she was to give her hand to everybody, and never to sit while elderly ladies were standing, but in shaking hands, did you lift your hand as soon as you entered a room, and walk across with it in the air, or did you raise it just when you wanted to shake hands? This was a matter she had never been sure of, but she felt that her way of shaking hands was pump-handle in its stiffness.

"I suppose if you could be as glad to see people as you ought to be, you wouldn't feel awkward,"

she said, "but the gladder I am the more shut up inside myself I feel."

She walked toward the mirror time after time. Every time the greeting she gave the figure in it seemed clumsy.

"I'll make believe it's Julia," she thought.

"Why, Julia!" she said. Her hand went out impulsively and heartily just at the right instant.

"You put it out just the minute you begin to say 'Howdy do,'" she thought. "I see how it ought to be now. That's the way it looks best."

Back and forth between the alcove, where the bed stood, and the mirror, she went, studying her reflection impersonally. Walking tall was a splendid idea. It gave one the "active chest" Mrs. Morgan was always talking about.

"It's all silly for anybody but me," she kept thinking, "but once I know how, I shan't get in my own way again."

The door behind her opened noiselessly. She caught Betty's reflection in the glass. Oh, if Betty had seen! Betty would think her vain and laugh. Betty couldn't understand that it was not vanity, but merely a wish to be comfortable as other people were. She stared steadily into the glass.

"What in the world are you doing?" Betty asked.

"Oh, are you there?" Margie asked. "I was

trying that exercise Mrs. Morgan gave us about opening the hand from the centre evenly. It's funny how your fingers wobble. Can you do it?"

"No," said Betty.

Betty had not seen. Margie's practising of grace remained her secret.

Margie learned the free-hand exercises, the dumbbell movements, the wand drill, and the Indian club swinging readily. The rhythm of them all made it easy. They were all a part of this new idea of breaking out of one's-self, and expressing one's-self freely. Margie became Mrs. Morgan's assistant in afternoon classes of small girls, and had no trouble whatever in holding their attention. In exchange for this, Mrs. Morgan taught her to read and to recite.

They worked a long time on a story in rhyme Margie had written. It was an anecdote she had heard of General Rowett, in Gordonsville, a story of the war-time. The General, in command somewhere down in Georgia, had ridden out one morning on Charley, his Kentucky thoroughbred, to learn why a reconnoitering party, sent out the night before, had not returned. He rode along a country road in the spring morning, and passed through a gate, which he closed behind him. Then thinking he saw his men across a field to the right, he galloped in that direction, till somebody on the road shouted: "Catch him, boys! It's that devil of a Dick Rowett." All

the men in sight were Confederates. They had the General in a trap. He wheeled about and shouted "Go!" to his horse, and made for the gate. The cry and the shout brought back to the horse his race-track days. He had never been a hunter, but he cleared the gate. A bullet stung him on one flank. Another bullet carried away the General's hat, but no following horse rose to the gate.

The story thrilled Margie, but when first she tried to repeat her verses, self-consciousness held her back. With Mrs. Morgan she learned that to see the whole picture was the first thing. "Be the General," said Mrs. Morgan. "Then don't think of this gesture or that. Be the General."

Margie tried it that way after she had learned to feel so sure of her hands that she forgot them. She remembered how the General had told the story before her once. She could feel the horse under her. She could feel the heavy gate as it swung open and shut again. She could see the men across the field. The sun was in her eyes. She heard the shout, the slow instant of turning, then

"Spur on Charley's flank of satin,
Jockey's hand on Charley's reins,
And the old Kentucky blue grass
Throbs to life in Charley's veins.
'Go!' "

Oh, the wild gallop, the leaning forward, the strain, the dare-devility of it all, the wild leap over the gate, and the reckless taunt of defiance the General flung back! And there was Kentucky blue grass in her veins, too, and the Gordons were fighting stock.

"I didn't know you could break loose," said Mrs. Morgan. "That was real."

It was easy after that to break loose, for you knew how, and the people who heard you had to see, they had to see what you saw. You hadn't to think of gestures. Now and then your hands made this motion or that, but you didn't notice. For the most part you stood still and felt. You were a part of the bravery and the romance of war, and you were Dare-devil Dick Rowett.

Margie called the story "The General's Ride," and recited it several times at Mrs. Morgan's recitals. She could not do sentimental or pathetic things, only something that stirred her, something she could break loose on.

What Mrs. Morgan taught her made debating easier. She practised diligently the exercises for the voice, learning to speak with a more open throat. She found that it was not necessary to speak in a higher key, as many of the girls did when they wanted to be heard. She merely let herself loose on her voice, and it carried to the farthest corner of the room. She knew it did, for there was sure to be somebody back by the

door, and one could tell at once whether he heard.

It was a day of great triumph for her when the chairman of the Committee on Arrangements came to ask her to speak in the debate to which the St. Anthony High School had challenged Centropolis. She had never lost a debate, and of all the Juniors only herself and Sam Willis, a Brilliant, were asked to speak, and not one other girl on either side. The debate was on the question of strikes, and Centropolis upheld the right of labor to strike if it chose.

The Assembly Hall was crowded with visitors that night. Margie's heart beat fast as she walked down the aisle and took her seat beside Sam Willis and the other debaters. It was fine to be in the fight, not for the Utile Dulces alone, but for Centropolis, the honor of the whole school. She was in the after-debate only, but the fighting would be the hottest then. She would be fighting for more than Centropolis even. She would be showing the world that girls asked no odds. They met boys on their own ground, and fought shoulder to shoulder with them.

All the speeches had been prepared beforehand. The leaders had considered what points the opposition would make, and given to each debater a point to refute. Margie had her speech by heart, but Sam Willis, in his excitement, cov-

ered the ground assigned to her. She was bewildered. What could she say now? Were the girls to have no chance to show what girls could do?

She heard the St. Anthony debater tell of cattle left sidetracked during a strike, so that they died of starvation. This, he said, was what happened when railway employees struck. He sat down.

“It’s your turn,” whispered one of the leaders.

“I haven’t anything to say,” Margie whispered back. “Sam made my point.”

“Get up! Get up!” the boys were saying all about her. “Say something. Don’t be afraid.”

Afraid? A girl afraid? Margie stood out in the aisle and turned to the audience.

“Mr. Chairman,” she said.

“The affirmative has the floor,” said the chairman.

Margie waited till everybody’s eyes were on her.

“And what happens when railroad men do not strike?” she said slowly. “Do cattle alone die then? Do you know why the engineers on the B. and L. struck last year?”

She paused. Somebody she had met in Nebraska had told her of the strike, but was it the B. and L.?

“They struck because of long hours, inhumanely long hours. Do you remember the rail-

way accident on that road? The company said an engineer disobeyed orders, but the men knew. The engineer was asleep. He had been on duty thirty-six hours, and the lights danced before him till green seemed to be where red really was. He could not leave his post because his pay would have been docked if he had not kept on. He was poor. The company was rich. If he had objected to their rules he would have been discharged. He went to sleep in his engine, and he died under it. More than cattle died then. Back beside one of the wrecked coaches a little girl ran up and down. She was looking for her mother. She wanted her mother, and they were afraid to let her see the thing that had been her mother. More than cattle died then. More than cattle always will die unless the laboring man is able, by striking, to get justice from his employers. He must strike. It is the only weapon of the thousands of oppressed workers. They must strike till the last armed foe expires, strike for their altars and their fires. Strike for the green graves of their sires, God and their native land!"

The hall rang with it. Centropolis, in the opinion of the judges, had presented the most telling arguments. Centropolis won. Margie did not feel that she had won, but, at least, she had helped, and, best of all, she had thought on her feet.

"We'll debate again next year," Sam Willis said. "I suppose I'll be leader then, and you'll be my second."

And Sam was the best debater in all the class.

Margie betook herself to her study of Physical Culture and Expression, with zeal. Next year's debate was a definite point to work toward.

At Easter, an old school friend of Mrs. Carlin, Mrs. Harper, who lived in a town twenty miles away, wrote to ask Margie down to assist in a church entertainment. She knew that Margie was Mrs. Morgan's assistant, and she wanted to get up a class in Physical Culture in her town, with Margie for teacher. The idea struck Margie as ridiculous. What did she know about real physical culture? However, it could do no harm to go down and give an exhibition at a church entertainment. Afterward, if Mrs. Harper got up a class she could at least teach what Mrs. Morgan had taught her. It would mean money, and she needed money for her share in the entertainments the class gave now and then. She wrote out, from consultation with Mrs. Morgan's books, several speeches on Physical Culture, and, amazed at her temerity, took the train for Greenville.

Mrs. Harper had done more than was expected. She had asked a number of women who had daughters to come in the afternoon and talk things over with Miss Carlin. Talk-

ing things over resolved itself into giving an exhibition. Margie had taken cold the day before, and there was already a sharp pain in her side when she lifted her arms, but the desire to do her best spurred her on. She went through all the exercises she knew, dumbbells, wands, and clubs, without a moment's rest. The pain grew worse.

After dinner they went to the church. There were many numbers on the programme and three were Margie's. The pain was now a thing that stabbed her when she breathed. First, she gave the dumbbell drill. Next she swung the clubs. The waltz music helped with that. Mrs. Harper came to tell her that ten pupils were already assured her. She felt weak and dizzy when she went on for the wand drill. The pianist played a march for her. He played faster than she had been used to hearing the piece. All the way through she wondered how she should be able to do the last motion. In it the wand was held with both hands at arms' length before the chest. Then the wand went back over the head and down, the arms turning in their sockets at the shoulders, but not bent at the elbows. One, in each bar of music, was the wand in front; two, the wand was at the length of the arms behind the body. In two bars one counted eight, and then, with a salute, lowered the wand. How could she do

it with this stabbing pain in her side, and the music so fast? Must she give up, and let all the girls who were to take lessons from her see that she could not do it? Suppose she said she was ill? The audience looked a blur. She shut her teeth. "I won't give in," she said. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, and then eight, only half a beat behind the piano.

"I won't give in," she said again. Physical culture was supposed to make one's health perfect. Very well, then, one must keep up.

She went home with Mrs. Harper and her daughter, who lived alone in a large house which they no longer had money enough to keep up. Their bed-room was upstairs at the back of the house. Margie went to bed in what had been the front parlor downstairs. The pain was fearful now. She thought of asking for a mustard-plaster, but would not that look as if Physical Culture was a failure? How could you have a pain in your lungs if the exercises really did for one what you told those ladies they did? Margie huddled under the bed-clothes, trying to get warm. She would take the early train home, and then she would give in. She dozed a little, by and bye, feeling feverish, but she sprang awake from sheer terror of the pain and the dark. The house was full of strange noises. The walls seemed to mutter, and the door—yes, the door creaked. Margie remembered that it had no lock. Surely,

it was opening. Something was in the room. She could not cry out, but she sat bolt upright, terror-stricken, for what seemed to her hours. Then something struck the bed beside her.

“Miaouw?” said a friendly, questioning voice. Margie reached out and gathered the cat to her. The animal purred contentedly and licked her face. The pain was better with another soul, in a warm body, a friendly, loving, comforting soul beside her. She slept with the cat nestled on her shoulder till a six-o’clock whistle blew somewhere. The early train would pass through in less than half an hour. She sprang up and threw on her clothes, smoothed her hair as best she could, seized her bag and ran. She could write and explain to Mrs. Harper afterward. Of course, she would take the class, but just now, the one thing was to get away—no matter how she looked—to get home where she could give in, and call for a mustard plaster.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE POT AND THE KETTLE.

THE Class of '90 had been a hundred strong as Fourths. As Seniors they numbered exactly sixty, forty girls and twenty boys. They stood now high above the rest of the school, and drew nearer together, for the heights are not spacious like the plains. Margie wrote herself Margaret Holyoke Carlin. It looked as impressive as Elizabeth Stuart Phelps. To her contributions in the school paper, she signed "Car." It was careless and bohemian and reminded one of Boz. She had been Margie in Gordonsville. For a time, during the Julia period, she had called herself Madge, which was a dashing name. Ella called her Marguerite. Now, even Glenda was requested to remember to say Margaret.

She and Glenda remained partners rather than friends, and Margie was on terms of studying-together intimacy with half a dozen girls. There was a sort of armed neutrality between her and Marcia Duncan, who had tattled. Marcia's only weakness was her admiration for Miss Marshall.

Florence Hawley, editor-in-chief of the *High School*, was a pleasant acquaintance both in school and out. So was Mabel Rohlfs, whose father had fought under Margie's uncle in the war. These girls were leaders; leaders, moreover, in a democracy. There was no breaking up into sets in school, whatever these were out of it. The outside world and the positions their families occupied in it, had little to do with school life. They all came to class entertainments, danced together, romped together. There were no sentimental attachments. Boys and girls worked and played together with no thought of romance. If they had preferences, they showed them frankly, and were neither embarrassed nor bold.

Margie liked all these boys, because she was interested in the things that interested them. Her tastes were boyish rather than ladylike. And from the beginning of the Senior year, her best friend was Walter Van Gelder. Walter was the son of one of the richest men in Centropolis, but Margie did not know this until after they had become firm friends. Indeed, she was drawn to him first by reading in the *Sentinel* of the failure of a man named Van Gelder. When she and Glenda and Florence Hawley and Sam Willis studied their Virgil together in the library, about the big table, that day after school, as was their custom, she was glad to see

Walter come in, and asked him to join them. Afterward Walter walked home with her. He was a big fellow, but nearly a year younger than she was.

"Was that your father I read about in the paper this morning?" she asked.

"No, that was my third or fourth cousin," Walter answered.

"I'm glad of that," Margie said, heartily.

"Would your mother mind if I drove you home from school afternoons?" Walter asked. "I can have the horse sent down, you know."

"You can ask her," said Margie.

"I will," Walter said. "I'd like to be friends with you, more than with anybody else."

"That's good of you," said Margie, laughing. Walter laughed, too. He was a merry boy, and absolutely honest and simple.

"I used to go around with my sister," he said, "but she's gone off to school now."

"Are you going to college next year?" Margie asked.

"If I can get in. Father wants me to go to Yale."

"My grandfather graduated there," said Margie, "but father is a Dartmouth man."

"My father never went to college," said Walter. "He had to earn his living from the time he was fourteen. I hate to study, but father wants me to, so I do. I wish I could get

the smiling face from Papa Brown the way you do."

"Let's study Latin together after this."

"All right," said Walter.

Margie felt toward him a little as she had felt toward Fred Douglas, the dog, in Gordonsville. He looked at her with Fred's eyes. He seemed in some way helpless and dependent. She liked Walter, not as she had cared for Julia, nor as she had cared for Fred, and as time went on she grew to feel that he belonged to her. She was surer of him than she had ever been of anyone else. She thought she would have felt the same way toward a brother if she had one. Walter was the most comfortable person to be with she had ever known. He seemed to radiate health and strength and peace of mind. You never had to feel that you were shoving him, working with him, straining to help him when he recited or when he spoke in debate. He was too simple and manly ever to be embarrassed or ridiculous, and while he was by no means brilliant, he was not at all dull. Everybody liked him, and he liked everybody who liked Margie. Many a rough place he made smooth for her. Also, a suggestion made to him was sure to be carried out by the boys.

The girls of '90 were more spirited than their predecessors had been. In the General Debating Society the boys had always held the important

offices and conducted affairs in their own way. It was only when the Class of '90 became Seniors that the girls began to long for power. Their forty votes had gone to swell the majority of Louis Horton, who had been class president in the Junior year, and wore a moustache. They had worked side by side with the boys, but now they began to feel that man must be shown his inferiority.

"The girls ought to run the school," Glenda said, and Marcia and Florence and Mabel agreed with her. Margie didn't. She preferred working with the boys, to being their antagonists. She would not admit that boys were superior to girls, but they certainly did add weight to things. She did not care for soprano choruses, in fact. She liked to debate against boys, but she wanted to debate with them, too. Boys went ahead and did things with less talk than girls; they fought fairer, and could fight on the floor, too, without carrying the fight anywhere else. They seemed to her less petty than girls. No, decidedly, she did not care for a school run entirely by the girls.

It was early in the school year that Margie felt a secret in the air. Glenda and Marcia and Florence were often whispering together. After a time on the notice board in the hall, and on the blackboard in Miss Marshall's room, where the Seniors sat, there appeared one day a mysterious

symbol. It consisted of two circles, one overlapping the other. That afternoon, after school, the girls disappeared to an upper class-room, and Margie and Walter studied in the library alone.

By another week, half of the girls in the class were holding up the thumbs and forefingers of each hand, linked together in rings, when they met. Margie asked Glenda what it meant.

"It's our secret society, the Boadiceans," Glenda said.

"What's it for?" asked Margie.

"It's to run things," said Glenda.

The idea amused Margie at first. Of course, the girls couldn't run things. A little later she began to feel vexed. It was not pleasant to be left out of things. Glenda and Mabel, and Florence and even Marcia, for all her admiration of Miss Marshall, were not silly. Whatever they set out to do, they would do. Sam Willis called the Boadiceans a lot of crowing hens. Tom Newman said girls made him tired. This roused Margie to side with the girls, and she was annoyed that she had not been asked to join. She was not hurt nor humiliated. It was merely that her idea of herself as a leader in the school suffered a setback. Glenda finally disclosed the reason for the leaving out.

"Why don't you apply for admission?" she asked.

"Is that the way people get in?"

"Yes," said Glenda. "It was Marcia's idea."

Margie immediately saw through the whole thing. Marcia had not wanted her to be one of the organizers. Marcia had more than once accused her of wanting to boss too much in the *Utile Dulces*. Marcia wanted to boss the Boadiceans herself, and keep others out till she had it all in her own hands.

"I don't think I'd care to ask to join any society," she said to Glenda.

And she said to herself:

"Just you wait. They'll ask me some time, and then maybe I will and maybe I won't."

She knew that in the Thirds, because of Clara Holcomb, she had a large following. And the new Fourths followed dumbly the lead of the Thirds, looking up to them. Anybody who could debate impressed them. Any Senior was great to a Third and to a Fourth. Only between Juniors and Seniors was there any rivalry, though, naturally, the two lower classes lacked respect for Juniors, and were pleased when the Seniors flouted them.

It was the custom to leave class banners undisturbed till a fortnight after school began. Then the new Seniors moved their banner from Junior place, at the right of the stage, to Senior place at the left, and the new Juniors hung their banner in Junior place.

Now, the Class of '91 was not proud of its banner. They had bought it when they were Fourths, and ill-advised. It had cost them forty dollars, but they had chanced on a banner-maker who was not expert, and had chosen a motto somewhat difficult to reproduce in satin letters. Their banner was brown plush, with the words, "Aut viam inveniam, aut faciam," in yellow satin letters. There was a tradition that those same members of '91, as Fourths, had undertaken to give a reception in the Assembly Hall in honor of their banner, and outraged Juniors had poured water on the forty-dollar emblem. At any rate, the letters were not free from disfiguring puckerings, and '91 was sensitive about the banner, so sensitive that they talked of it more vaingloriously than was necessary or even wise.

The dark green and Nile green and silver of '90 looked not only elegant, but neat, and '90 greeted the banner's first appearance in Senior place with cheers. It was on a morning when several Seniors were required to read essays from the stage. Margie was among them, and she had written for the occasion a poem in dactylic hexameter in praise of '90.

For ages, she said, the Spirit of Genius had been seeking a company with whom she might abide. After long wanderings, at the close of a day, she found what she sought.

“Softly the violet eyes of the beautiful gloaming
were closing,
Lulled by the whispering winds, the new moon
a taper to bed-ward.

The mists stealing up from the river,
The night gliding downward to meet them,
And the Lethe of silence and evening
Was soothing the city to slumber.
Then rested the Spirit of Genius
In the sky like a star o'er the city,
And silently folding her pinions,
Like a star through the twilight descended.”

She paused by the Greek-lettered cornerstone
of the High School, which Margie described
as a temple.

“She paused at the gates of a temple,
Where dim in the deepening twilight
She saw, carved in granite, some words
Of the tongue she had spoken with Homer.
As, when wandering in a great city,
'Mid the thousands of strange faces passing,
One sees the dear face of a friend,
And joyful advances to meet him.
So, to the heart of the Spirit,
For centuries banished from Hellas,
Came the sight of that sentence in Greek,
Carven there on the wall of the temple.”

The spirit entered and passed to the inner-

most shrine, where banners of departed heroes hung.

“Nearest the close-curtained shrine
Two banners hung, bearing devices,
Carefully dusted and tended,
Still breathing the smoke of the battle,
One——”

Here Margie turned toward the brown and yellow banner of '91.

“——of the color of oak leaves,
When the winter has wrinkled and killed them.
Lifeless and dull, emblematic, with a wavering
motto, the color
Foul jealousy dresses herself in, since time when
Time had his beginning.
Seeing, the Spirit frowned, moved away and
looked up at the other.
The other, made all of the hue that the balsam
tree wears in December,
Vigorous, spring-like forever, though bitter the
frost and the winter.
On it a modest device, ‘Palma non sine pulvere,’
Made all of shimmering silk, like the glint of the
moon on the water,
Emblem of hope high above the affairs of life,
lighting its darkness.
Trimmings of glistening silver, that lines clouds
of bitterest sorrow.”

The Spirit of Genius then, "*arma ad sidera tollens*," burst forth into a eulogy of '90. Fame had long whispered of their "modesty, beauty and wit, their wisdom, their kind condescension."

"Here, by your banner I stand," she said, and Margie turned toward the green and silver.

"And, laying her white hand upon it,
Here is my home and my people,
And here will I rest me forever,
And forever, while Time turns his hour-glass,
Fame shall herald the praises of '90,
And as a coral reef grows
Round the top of some slow-sinking mountain,
So your glory forever shall grow,
While into the sea of oblivion
The fame of your schoolmates shall sink,
Fading into the water unnoticed."

"Soft in the eastern sky the pale light of morning is breaking,
Swiftly the darkness flies before Phœbus' galloping horses,
And as the city awakes and the devotees flock to the temple,
The Spirit wraps round her her cloak, and invisible, floating in ether,
Rests there by the side of the banner, the banner of genius and '90."

The Class of '91 hissed. It was larger than the Class of '90, but one cheer is louder than ten hisses, and '90 cheered. Ninety-one had to wait two months before it could retaliate. The verses, by Mr. Harmon's request, were printed in the *High School World*, and the poet of '91 printed his answer in the number after that. His poem was in pentameter, and he called '90's banner the emblem of "verdant greenness," which at once became his nickname. "Verdant Greenness Johnson" he was all the rest of his school life.

Ninety, however, could act at once. No later than the next day Marcia came with an invitation to Margie to join the Boadiceans.

"I'll think it over," said Margie.

She had not been invited to join the Inner Concentrics, but merely to become a Boadicean. The Inner Concentrics were all Seniors, and were the heart of the thing. A Junior or a Third, or even a Fourth, might be an Outer Concentric. The Outer Concentrics could hold no offices.

When Marcia came again, it was to ask her if she would not like to be an Inner Concentric.

"Very much, indeed," said Margie.

"But don't tell that I broke the rule and asked you," said Marcia.

"I won't tell," said Margie.

One thing Margie had never learned to do gracefully, and that was to take a practical joke.

April the first was a day to which she always looked forward with dread. She never played practical jokes on anyone, and in all her poking fun never intentionally hurt anyone's feelings, and she could not be the victim of a pleasantry without losing her temper. She was well aware of this, and knew that the girls were aware of it, too. She felt that Marcia would instigate something very unpleasant at her initiation. The girls would do their best to make her ridiculous. However, she wanted to fight Marcia on even grounds as an Inner Concentric. If Marcia did make the initiation unpleasant, so much the worse for Marcia afterward. At all events, she would keep her temper and do her best to come out of the thing with honor.

The Boadiceans, by special permission of Mr. Harmon, held their initiations in the Senior room at dead of night, which, for practical reasons, was made seven o'clock.

Margie had been told to come at eight, for there was another candidate to be initiated first. Margie hoped that the girls would have their fun out on Ruth Webster, so that she should be let off lightly. She did not like Marcia, but she felt toward her as she had never before felt toward anyone she disliked. She was just to her, and respected her. One did not defeat Marcia easily.

Having their fun out with Ruth Webster,

however, made things no easier for Margie when the girls began on her. Ruth was a delicate and sensitive girl, and they tortured her. They blindfolded her and made her stand on one foot and sing. They made her whirl round and round, saying the multiplication table. They made her tell her most precious secrets, and they ordered her to stand rigid while they tickled her. This, they told her solemnly, was to test her loyalty and her nerve. Then, with great solemnity, they prepared to set the seal of Boadicea on her.

“You will not wince?” they asked her.

“No,” said Ruth, feebly.

“Is the brand hot?” some one asked.

“At white heat,” was the response.

Of course, Ruth knew they wouldn’t really burn her, but, at the same time, she fancied they might. They kept her blindfolded, and their talk was harrowing.

Marcia rolled up Ruth’s sleeve.

“Give me the iron!” she cried. Something warm passed Ruth’s face. There was an instant of fearful suspense, and then something was pressed against her arm. It felt like a hot iron. Ruth instantly screamed and fell to the floor. There she lay screaming and choking.

“It was only ice,” the girls all cried.

Ruth still screamed.

“I’m dying, I’m dying,” she gasped.

“Get a doctor!” cried Glenda. The other

girls stood pale with terror. Marcia alone kept her head.

"She's got hysterics," she said. "I'll fix her."

She pulled Ruth to her feet, and slapped her in the face. Ruth stopped screaming and began to laugh quite as wildly as she had screamed. Marcia slapped her again.

"I'll hit harder if you don't stop, you idiot," she said. "Do you want to join this society, or don't you?"

Ruth stopped laughing and sat down breathless.

"Of course I do," she said.

"Well, stop acting like a baby, then."

"You scared me half to death. It felt exactly like a burn. I'm sorry I acted so silly."

It was distinctly Marcia's triumph. Ruth bore no resentment, but she wanted to see how Margie would act when they branded her.

"We won't brand her," said Marcia. "She wouldn't mind that. We'll jab pins into her."

"Oh, really and truly?" asked Ruth.

"Wait and see."

At this moment Margie knocked at the door, knocked as she had been bidden to do, twice, waited a moment and knocked three times. This was necessary to avoid being mistaken for the janitor, who sometimes came to sweep out. He knocked only once. Mabel came out and blindfolded her.

"Can you see anything?" Mabel asked.

"Not a thing," said Margie, who could see the floor perfectly well. Mabel led her in and shut the door.

"Grand Tetrarch," she said, "I bring a humble seeker."

"Bid her approach," said the Grand Tetrarch.

"It's Glenda," thought Margie. "I knew Marcia wouldn't stand having her on the floor to argue."

"What does the humble seeker want?" the Tetrarch went on. "Speak, seeker."

"To join the Inner Concentrics, please, your Augustness," said Margie.

"What would you do?"

"I would do all that doth become an Inner Concentric. Who dares do more is none."

"What'll I tell her to do?" she heard Glenda whisper.

"Tell her to swear," whispered Marcia.

"Swear!" said the Tetrarch.

"Damn," said Margie, promptly.

Somebody giggled.

"Not that way. Swear to keep the secrets of this mighty society and to do the bidding of its Council so long as you live. Swear on your honor."

"I swear," said Margie, "on my honor."

"What can you do to deserve the honor of being an Inner Concentric?" the Tetrarch asked.

"Whatever you bid me do."

"Can you do nothing remarkable?"

"Yes, I can move the top of my head."

"Do it," they cried.

Margie moved the top of her scalp.

"Was it well done, Grand Inquisitor?"

"Well done," was the answer. Margie recognized Marcia's voice. "Remarkably well done."

"Can you wag your ears, in addition to moving your scalp?" Marcia asked.

"Yes," said Margie, and raising her hands, she moved her ears.

Somebody giggled.

"Grand Inquisitor, examine the candidate," said the Tetrarch. Margie's heart beat faster. This was Marcia's chance, and Marcia would make the most of it.

"We have here, Inner Concentrics," said Marcia, "an example of reversion of the original type. The movable scalp, the wagging ear. The movable scalp is common to many animals, but what do the wagging ears suggest? Do they not make us think of a certain animal whose favorite food is thistles? The candidate shows us her real nature frankly, but let us hope she will not be too obstinate."

The Boadiceans laughed. Margie resolutely kept her expression, and hoped she had not flushed.

"Confess now your worst fault," Marcia went

on. "Speak the truth or you shall hear it from us. What is it?"

"Conceit," said Margie.

"That's what Marcia thought I wouldn't admit," she said to herself.

"You have not spoken truly," said Marcia, "so you must bear the truth. What you mistake for conceit is an ordinary case of swelled head."

The girls laughed again. Margie began to boil inwardly.

"Oh, wait till I get a chance to hit back," she thought.

"Why don't you laugh?" said Marcia.

"Was that a joke?"

"No, it was the truth. Can you take a joke?"

"No," said Margie.

"That means you cannot see one?"

Margie's answer was lost in jeers.

"I don't take all I see," she said. "People are brought up so differently."

"Do you admire your own poetry?"

"Immensely."

"Can you explain why?"

"No more than I could explain color to the blind."

"Recite the poem you admire most."

Margie recited some verses beginning:

"The rain had fallen. The poet arose.
He passed by the town and out of the street."

The Boadiceans hissed at the end of every line.

"Is that good, Inner Concentrics?" Marcia asked.

"The worst we ever heard," they cried. "Did he get his feet wet? Tommy rot!"

"Who would we say wrote it if we saw it in print?" asked Marcia.

"Margaret Holyoke Carlin," they cried.

"I wouldn't," said Margie. "I'd say Tennyson. He claims it. You told me to recite the poem I admired most. Tennyson is an Englishman, and England is an island, and an island is—"

Hisses and laughter drowned out the rest.

"Do you feel yourself competent to preside over a parliamentary body?" Marcia asked.

"I do."

"Suppose a motion to reconsider a vote on suspension of rules was offered. How large a vote would you say was necessary to carry it?"

"Two-thirds," said Margie.

"Wrong," said Marcia; "suspension of rules cannot be reconsidered. And you still think yourself competent to preside over a parliamentary body?"

"I do."

"Must the vote on an amendment to a motion to lie on the table be unanimous, or only a majority?"

"I do not know."

"She does not know," they all chanted.

"Why don't you know?" asked Marcia.

"There has never been any vote for any one to count. Motion to table cannot be amended."

"Have you got Roberts' here?" she heard Marcia whisper.

"No," somebody whispered back. Margie felt relieved.

Marcia returned to the attack.

"If I ask you a simple question, will you answer it by yes or no?"

"I will," said Margie.

"Is it true that you have stopped passing other people's essays off for yours in composition?"

"Yes," said Margie; "I like to be unique."

"What do you expect to be after you graduate?"

"An alumna," said Margie. Her ambition was one thing she would not have the girls know.

"Is it true that you hope to be a writer?"

"I write a good hand now."

"Is it not true that rejected manuscript is addressed to you at this school?"

There was a shout of glee at this, for Margie whitened.

It was true. Margie was hit, and hit hard. How did Marcia know? She could not know unless she had—yes, she must have seen Margie drop one envelope into her drawer in the draw-

ing-room. She had been near enough to see a magazine name on it. She was in a rage now, and let herself go.

"It is true," Margie said. "Did you find the sort of pencil you wanted? I have several more in that drawer."

"I never looked into your drawer," said Marcia.

"I beg your pardon, then," said Margie. "It must have been over my shoulder you looked."

"I don't look over shoulders!"

"Not even cold ones?"

This went home. Marcia had overlooked Margie's cold shoulder after the episode of Clara Holcomb. She had asked Margie twice to become a Boadicean.

"Stick to the ritual," whispered Glenda.

"Where were you born?" asked Marcia.

"In Illinois."

"You were born a sucker, then?"

"No one is born with teeth," said Margie.

"And your being born an Illinoisan is your reason for saying 'grass' and 'can't'?" Marcia imitated Margie's short a's. Marcia herself came from Boston and used the broad "a." Also, she put "r" on after a's and o's, as the teacher in Nebraska had done.

"Yes. It's my reason, too, for not saying 'Minnesoter' and 'awr-inspiring.'"

"Were your manners originally good?"

"Of course. I was born in Illinois."

"Why have you changed them since you came to Minnesota?"

"I began to meet people from Massachusetts, and I am by nature adaptable."

"So, you think people from Massachusetts are worth copying, then?"

Laughter greeted this hit.

"Yes."

"Why?"

"It's so pleasant not to have any feeling against looking at other people's letters."

Marcia merely stored this up for future reference.

"Have you mentioned all your faults?" she asked.

"No," said Margie. "Most of them are as plain to be seen as the nose"—she meant to say "on your face," but Marcia had a snub nose—"on my face," she substituted.

"That's plain enough," said Marcia, significantly.

"They are as plain as—well, as freckles are."

Marcia was freckled.

"One of them is being too easily persuaded," Margie went on. "You had to ask me only twice before I consented to join this society."

This slap, too, went home. Marcia had broken her own rule.

"Isn't violating confidences another of them?"
Marcia asked.

Margie had no answer ready.

"Isn't it?" repeated Marcia.

"Glass houses are fragile," said Margie.

"Test her sense of smell," said the Grand Tetrarch. "It's in the list," she added in a whisper.

"Can you tell the difference between two kinds of perfume?" asked Marcia.

"I can," said Margie.

A bottle of hartshorn was thrust under her nose suddenly.

"What's that?" asked Marcia.

"Hartshorn," said Margie.

She saw from beneath the bandage over her eyes Marcia's hand lifting a handkerchief to her.

"What's that?" Marcia asked.

"Extract of vanilla," said Margie. "Aren't you going to let me smell a perfume?"

The laugh was not all with Marcia now.

"Is your hearing good?" asked Marcia.

"Yes."

"Then why do you talk and never listen?"

"I have listened this evening. I have heard."

"What have you heard here?"

"Mainly the noise of two kinds of animals."

"Human being and—the animal that feeds on thistles?"

The Boadiceans laughed.

"No," said Margie; "snakes and geese." She heard Glenda laugh.

"And have you any good qualities to counter-balance your faults?" Marcia asked.

"One."

"What is that?"

"I am not a tattle-tale."

"Free the candidate from blindness and extend to her the right hand of fellowship," said the Grand Tetrarch.

Marcia's clasp was not cordial.

CHAPTER XX.

THE DAY OF THE POT.

ONE of the closing ceremonies in each school year was a reception in honor of the president of the General Debating Society. He was always a Senior, and it was his privilege to appoint a successor in the person of a temporary chairman, who should preside at the first meeting of the society, in the next autumn, and resign his gavel to a properly elected president. Seniors had little care that the management of the *World* passed into Junior hands in March, but they clung to control of the General Society till the end of their class existence.

The temporary chairman appointed by '89 was Louis Horton, who wore the only moustache in school. In spite of his moustache, he was not a boy of any great force, though a calm and capable presiding officer. He was somewhat slow in calling the society together for the election of officers in the fall, and days before that time the Supreme Council of the Boadiceans, which consisted of the officers only of that

body, had arranged a slate of their own. Glenda was to be treasurer, and Mabel secretary. They wanted Florence Hawley, who was decidedly the most popular girl in school, to be president, but Florence declined. So in the end they decided to permit Louis Horton to retain the chair as president. So much they would grant to the boys, who, if driven too far, might leave the society altogether, which was a thing even Marcia did not desire. These plans were discussed in secret meetings of the Council of the Boadiceans, and Margie, not being in the council, knew nothing of them.

Now, it happened that on a morning early in October Louis Horton woke to his duty. He went at once to the notice board in the hall and posted a call for a meeting of the General Society that same day after school, election of officers to be the business of the day. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that Sam Willis and Tom Newman suggested the thing to him, for it was a day so stormy that half the school was absent, and not one member of the Inner Circle of the Boadiceans present. So few of the girls came to the meeting that the boys were for once almost in the majority, and they elected the slate that pleased them best. Sam and Tom wanted no offices. They preferred to be free to work on the floor, and in committees. Louis Horton was elected president by a unanimous

vote, nor was there much opposition to any of the other candidates. The secretaryship, which was considered next in honor to the presidency, went to Will Holmes, a Senior. Somewhat of the same cloud that hung over Clara Holcomb darkened poor Willard's home. His elder brother had absconded with the funds of a bank, and everybody knew it. His election gave general satisfaction.

The morrow dawned clear and crisp. The Inner Council of the Boadiceans came back to school to learn, with intense indignation, what had been done during their absence. Once again, as in former years, the boys held all the offices of the General Society.

"I don't see why on earth you let them do it," said Marcia to Margie. "You were there, weren't you?"

"Yes, but I didn't see any reason to object."

"The Inner Council had a slate prepared," said Marcia.

"I'm not in the Inner Council," said Margie. "So how was I to know? It can't be helped now, anyway."

"Oh, yes, it can. It's got to be," said Marcia.

The symbol of the Boadiceans appeared on all the blackboards, with the number "2." Recitations were over at one, and in the hour's wait most of the girls went out for lunch.

Walter and Margie walked down to the con-

fectioner's. Walter's conception of what was due a girl friend meant unlimited candy. His artistic sense satisfied himself in matching Margie's ribbons or frock in the candy he bought. She was wearing a deep violet frock that day, so Walter bought candied violets. They were not especially good to eat, and costing more money than Walter happened to have about him, he asked to have them charged to his father.

"Will your father like your doing that?" Margie asked, fearful because of the extravagance.

"Why, of course," said Walter. "I wouldn't do it if I didn't know that. Father gets more fun out of what I spend than out of what he spends himself. He couldn't buy candy when he was a boy, you know. Don't you want to get some more to take to the girls?"

"I'll divide this," said Margie. "I've got to go back now to a meeting."

"Tom says he bets the girls are going to try to upset the election. I hope they won't. I nominated Will Holmes, you know. I'd feel mighty mean if he was thrown out."

"The girls can't do anything," Margie said, confidently. "They can't upset an election."

"Girls are mighty smart," was Walter's comment.

And smart the Boadiceans were. They were gathered in full force when Margie returned.

Margie divided the candied violets generously. She was never fond of candy.

“We are met together to consider important business,” said the Grand Tetrarch. “The Grand Inquisitor will explain.”

Marcia took the floor.

“It’s this way,” said she. “The boys got together yesterday when most of us weren’t here, and elected officers for the General Debating Society. Now, we don’t mind having Louis Horton for president, but we’ve got to find some way to put those other boys out and elect the girls we want.”

“I don’t see how we can do that,” said Margie. “If you’d told us earlier we could have nominated girls. It’s too late now.”

“No, it isn’t,” said Marcia. “All we have to do is to raise the point that no quorum was present at the election, and that therefore it is invalid.”

“But how can you prove that?” asked Ruth.

“We can call for the minutes of the previous meeting, and add up the votes. I know already that there was not a quorum.”

“How many makes a quorum?” asked Ruth.

“A majority. Counting the Fourths, the total membership ought to be three hundred and fifty, or nearly that. I’ve looked it up. A quorum then would be one hundred and seventy-six, at the lowest.”

"But are the Fourths really members before the election of officers?" said Margie. "The first thing Louis Horton did, after he was elected, was to extend a welcome to the Fourths. 'You are now members of this society,' he said, 'and entitled to vote on any question.' Doesn't that look as if they were not members till then? They couldn't be members, could they, under a temporary chairman? A society doesn't take in new members during a recess. Leaving out the Fourths, I think there was a majority of members present."

"That's all bosh," said Marcia. "The Fourths voted in election, didn't they, and the secretary counted their votes?"

"I don't know," said Margie.

"Well, I know they did. They're members, and helped to make a quorum. If they're not members, the election is invalid because they voted. Either way, we can upset it."

"Mustn't the point of no quorum be raised at the time?" asked Mabel.

"No," said Marcia. "We have votes enough to carry any question we choose, anyway. All we've got to do is to get this thing through quick before the boys find out what we're up to. Twenty members can sign a call to a meeting at any time. It's in our by-laws. We want a meeting for to-morrow. Then we'll show those boys what we can do."

"The boys didn't do it all," said Margie. "A good many girls were there. I voted."

"Then you can properly move to reconsider."

"You can't reconsider a vote."

"You can do anything if you've got enough people on your side," said Marcia. "Now, when we call the meeting, and we have the election declared invalid, I'll move that Louis Horton be elected by a unanimous vote."

"That's good," said Margie. "Who's to make the motion to have the election declared invalid?"

"The Council has decided on you for that," said Marcia. "It will be only to oust Will Holmes and two or three other boys."

"What do you want me to do it for?" Margie asked.

"Because you can put it up best, and the Thirds always vote your way."

"I'd rather let somebody else do it," said Margie.

"Nobody else can do it so well," said Mabel.

"But it will make Will Holmes feel awfully bad," said Margie. "It seems to me rather mean. I'd rather let somebody else do it."

"The Council decrees that you must do it," said Glenda.

Must was not a happy choice of words to a Gordon.

"I won't do it," said Margie. "You want

me to get up there and do something that you all won't do because it's mean. Marcia will get credit for electing Louis Horton, and everybody will think that I started the fuss on my own hook. I'll make nominations, but somebody else will have to start the thing. I won't."

"You can't refuse. You've sworn to do the bidding of the Council," said Marcia.

"When I swore that I thought the Council meant just the Inner Concentrics. You didn't tell me a word about a Supreme Council. I do refuse. I won't make that motion. I won't be a cat's-paw."

"You'd rather be a traitor to this society?"

"Traitor, nonsense. I'm ready to do anything else, but I know just how Will Holmes will feel, and—well, I just won't. I might if it was somebody else, but you all know how it is with Will Holmes."

"You weren't so tender with Clara Holcomb," said Marcia.

"She hadn't been elected to anything," said Margie. "I wasn't the one, either, who told her what had been done."

"Fellow-Boadiceans," said Marcia, "what penalty is imposed on those who go back on their word of honor, and refuse to do the bidding of the Council?"

"Disgrace and expulsion," they chanted.

"You won't expel me," said Margie, "or

I'm going to quit right now. I don't care a rap for your silly society, anyway, and I'm going to do as I please. I resign here and now."

"You can't resign," cried Marcia. "Girls, let's expel her."

There was a rush for Margie. She made for the door. The Boadiceans caught her and compelled her to walk out backward. She was so angry that she kept her temper and laughed in their faces.

"We have your oath still," Marcia called out as the door closed after Margie.

"Keep it," shouted Margie. "Keep it, and welcome. You didn't keep your own."

Outside the school-house Walter was waiting.

Margie lived more than a mile from the school, and usually brought her lunch with her, as many of the girls did. There was always something to be looked up in the school library after school, or a group of boys and girls who liked to study together. Walter usually went home to luncheon or went to the restaurant not far away. "Cold things," he said, "were not filling," and the worst calamity he could imagine was going hungry. It was a settled thing now that his horse should be at the school-house door at three, and Walter never dreamed of concealing the fact that it was there for Margie. As many other girls and boys as could find room to hang on the cart anywhere were welcome to ride

home, too, but only after Walter had asked Margie if she minded it. Margie was first.

This afternoon Miss Marshall came out a little while before Margie appeared. She did not altogether approve Walter's devotion to Margie, which she chose to interpret in her own way.

"Waiting for somebody, Walter?" she asked, significantly.

"Yes; I'm waiting for Margaret Carlin," said Walter, simply, raising his hat. The idea of Miss Marshall's disapproval had never dawned on him, and would not have disturbed him if it had.

Margie burst out the door, pale with rage. Almost before Walter had helped her into the cart, she had told him the whole story.

"I think you were right," said Walter. "Of course you were, but they'll have their way, anyway. You might just as well have given in. There's so many of them, and they'll be down on you."

"I don't care," said Margie, hotly. "It's a mean trick, and if I'd done what they wanted me to, and the boys were mad, they'd have let everybody think it was all my own idea."

"That's so," said Walter. "But we can't do anything."

Walter's horse was a fast one, and Walter a reckless driver. Just then the cart crossed in

front of a cable car, clearing it by an inch. Margie did not even hear the motorman's yell of rage.

"Yes, we can," she insisted. "You just get the boys to hang together, and stick to their ticket. Don't let anybody debate after a nomination."

They had turned into a wide, quiet street now, and Walter drove slower. The grass plots in front of the houses were gay with flaming salvia and foliage plants. The trees were yellow and crimson, and the October afternoon was mellow with haze and warmth. Margie sat bolt upright, her teeth set.

"But they're two to one against us," said Walter.

"That won't make any difference," said Margie.

Walter was distressed.

"Say we go get some ice-cream," he said.

"I don't want anything to eat," said Margie.

"Wouldn't you like to drive out to the lake and see if we can find some violets?"

"No," said she. "I want to go to Clara Holcomb's. Please take me there."

They drove out on an avenue which skirted the edge of the bluff. The lower town lay basking in the smoky blue haze. Walter met a great many people he knew. Margie saw nothing. She was turning over in her mind a slowly developed scheme of revenge.

"Please don't wait for me at Clara's," she said. "I'll just walk home from there."

"All right," said Walter.

They passed a gentleman walking.

"Hello, boy," he said.

"I'll be back and pick you up in a minute," Walter called to him.

"That's my father," he explained to Margie.

Margie looked back absently. Mr. Van Gelder was sitting on the low wall which fenced in a lawn, and looked after them, smiling. He waved his hand when he saw Margie turn.

"He looks pleasant," she said.

"That's what he is," said Walter.

Margie made the borrowing of a book from Clara the excuse for her call, and they talked long of school affairs. Clara had heard of the Boadiceans, and wanted to know about them.

"I can't tell about them," said Margie. "It's a secret society, you know, but the general idea of it is to keep the boys from running things so much."

"I don't think they ought to run everything, do you?" said Clara.

"No, I don't. We're going to show them a thing or two. We want all you Third girls and the Fourth girls to stick by us."

"I'll vote for anything you say," said Clara.

"That's what I want. You get all the girls

you know to do it, too, and we'll show the boys who's running things."

"I'll do my best," said Clara.

Margie's expulsion from the society made little difference in the manner of the girls when she came to school next day. Marcia was pleased. Margie was now powerless. There was nothing she could do now to thwart anyone's plans. Glenda thought Margie pig-headed.

"I don't see any sense in cutting off your nose to spite your face," she said.

"Marcia made me mad," said Margie. "I said more than I meant to say."

Expulsion did not mean ostracism. Marcia was, if anything, more cordial than usual. Margie was no longer a rival to fear.

Twenty Boadiceans called for a meeting of the General Society for that day at two, and were prepared to fight to the last ditch. The meeting was larger than any before in the history of the school. The boys scented something unusual in the air, and Walter imparted to them the Boadiceans' scheme. He did not, however, say that Margie had told him. He merely said he was willing to bet he knew what the girls were up to.

He and Tom and Sam and Harry Parker discussed the matter in the cloak-room. Tom was considered the most deeply learned boy in school.

He read Schopenhauer, and had an air of slightly bored toleration for the follies of the world.

"It's sickening," he said, "to see girls forget their proper sphere like this."

"They want the earth, confound 'em," said Sam. Sam was the oldest boy in school, a hard hitter, and already a man of affairs. He had charge of the circulation of an afternoon paper in one quarter of the city, and earned most of his living thereby.

"I don't see what we can do to head them off," said Walter.

"Louis ought to refuse to recognize any of them," said Sam. "That's the way they do in Congress. If he'd do that, they couldn't get their motion to upset the election before the house."

Tom looked disgusted.

"You make me tired," he said. "You know what Louis is. All the girls have to do is to say 'shoo' to him, and he runs."

"If they do elect a girl in his place," said Harry Parker, "we'll have fun with her. Girls always get rattled."

Harry was considered an expert on the subject of girls. He was the beau of the school, and president of the class.

"But we don't want 'em to put Will out," said Walter. "You know——"

"Mum!" said all the boys in assent.

Will himself came in then. Some inkling of the matter had reached him.

"I wish you fellows wouldn't bother about me," he said. "I'd rather not have a fight about it."

"Get out," said Walter. "We're not going to make the fight on your account. It's the principle of the thing."

There was a long and perturbed silence, and much walking about in dignified meditation.

"Darn 'em," said Sam.

"Co-education is a fool idea," said Tom. "Girls haven't any business in a high school."

"But what are we going to do?" asked Harry.

"We can't do a dog-goned thing," said Walter, hopelessly. "We've just got to get down and let them walk on us."

"We won't," said Sam. "We'll give them the fight of their lives, and don't you forget it."

"Oh, rot!" said Tom. "The whole thing is disgusting. We are overwhelmed by numbers—gnats, gad-flies, crowing hens."

"Well," said Sam, "we won't let 'em talk any more than we can help."

And with this small grain of comfort, they marched boldly to the meeting, ready to lead their forlorn hope.

The boys sat on the left side of the hall. They looked determined, but the girls outnumbered

them overwhelmingly. The meeting opened in tense calm.

"If there are no objections, the reading of the minutes of the last meeting will be omitted," said the chair.

Marcia opened the battle.

"I object," said Marcia. "I call for the reading of the minutes."

The minutes were read.

Margie came in and sat down beside Clara Holcomb and the Thirds.

"If there are no objections, the minutes will stand approved as read," said the chair.

"I object," said Marcia, again. "The minutes show that a quorum was not present at the last meeting. All business transacted was, therefore, invalid, and cannot stand as the decision of this society. I move that the minutes be rejected."

"I second the motion," said a Boadicean.

"I object, Mr. President," cried Sam. "It is too late to raise the point of no quorum now. We have elected officers—and——"

"Question! Question!" shouted the Boadiceans.

"I move that the motion to reject the minutes be laid on the table!" cried Tom. Sam seconded the motion.

"Question! Question!" shouted the whole society.

The President pounded the desk with his gavel.

"The question before the house is on the motion to table. All in favor of this motion say 'Aye.' "

"Aye," yelled the boys.

"Contrary, 'No.' "

"No!" shouted the girls.

"Division! Division!" cried the girls.

The ayes and noes stood up and were counted.

The motion was lost.

"Question! Question!" chorused the Boadiceans again. Marcia's motion was put and carried.

"I will call Walter Van Gelder to the chair," said Louis Horton, "since the society has now no president."

Will Holmes, too, left his place, and Walter asked a Junior boy to act as temporary secretary.

Marcia was on her feet again.

"Mr. Chairman," she said, "I move that the secretary be instructed to cast the vote of this society for Louis Horton as president."

This was a surprise to the boys, who had not expected such generosity from the conquerors. They joined in lustily and Louis Horton resumed the chair, smiling.

"The next business will be the election of secretary," said the President. "Does the chair hear any nominations?"

"Mr. President," said Walter, "I nominate Willard Holmes." Tom Newman seconded

the motion. It was half-heartedly done, for they had no hope of winning if the girls chose to oppose, but Will was a favorite, and the boys knew that he would feel his removal keenly.

Glenda nominated Mabel. Florence Hawley seconded the nomination. With victory so entirely a matter of numbers, it was not worth while to make speeches.

"Are there any more nominations?" asked the chair. Margie stood up.

"Mr. President," she said, "in choosing a secretary, I think we should select very carefully. We want our minutes to be kept in such a way that we shall be proud to leave them as a record to future members. Let us choose some one of literary ability and experience. I nominate Florence Hawley."

"I second the nomination," said Clara, timidly.

Sam saw the meaning of it before Marcia did. He sprang to his feet.

"I move that nominations be now closed," he said, "and that we proceed at once to vote."

Walter seconded.

"Yell!" said Sam to the boys.

Marcia was on her feet, trying to move a withdrawal of her nomination of Mabel. She could not be heard above the yells of "Question! Question!" from the boys. Louis Horton looked bewildered. Sam's threatening finger was shaking

at him. The boys stood up and went on yelling "Question!" The gavel pounded frantically.

"It is moved and seconded that we vote," piped Louis, in a shrill falsetto. In spite of the Boadiceans, the ayes had it. The other girls did not understand at all what the fuss was about, anyway. The uproar confused them.

The Boadiceans had provided all the girls with slips of paper. Louis appointed Harry and Sam to collect and count the votes. Marcia hurried from row to row in an attempt to rally her forces. Sam and Harry hurried to collect Senior votes first. Marcia wasted time with the Third girls, who voted solidly after Clara's lead. Florence Hawley was the most popular girl in school.

Margie sat back and waited. She had divided the girls among themselves. They split evenly, and Willard Holmes was elected.

It mattered nothing that they rallied and made Glenda treasurer. Margie herself voted for her. All she cared about was showing Marcia that she was still to be reckoned with.

"Tally one for me," she said to herself.

As they came out of the meeting Marcia turned to her with a withering glance.

"That's your idea of honor, is it?" she said.
"That's how you keep your oath."

"The pot," said Margie, "is not the only brunette in the kitchen."

CHAPTER XXI.

PRINCE FORTUNATUS.

IT was fortunate for Margie that two opinions prevailed concerning her action. Glenda's firm conviction was that Margie had meant well.

"She did her best to have a girl elected, didn't she?" Glenda insisted. "And we hadn't told her who we wanted for secretary."

"She's not a fool," said Marcia. "She knew exactly what would happen. She meant to split the vote."

"I can't see that at all," Glenda replied. "Florence would have made a good deal better secretary than Mabel. I voted for her."

"Good gracious!" said Marcia. "Why, you swore to follow the orders of the Council."

"Yes, but that was before Florence was nominated. I voted for a girl."

"You violated your oath."

"I didn't do any such thing. Margaret didn't, either. She was doing the best she could. It's funny if voting for Florence was violating our oaths, so many of us did it. I think Margaret stood by us."

Marcia could not express her disgust.

"I'll bet anything she told the boys what we were going to do," said Marcia.

"I'll bet she didn't. I'm going to ask her."

Margie's only answer to the question was:

"What do you take me for? Of course I didn't tell the boys."

This was technically true, for she had told Walter, and Walter had told the rest.

Glenda remained convinced. The other girls were divided in their opinion, but as Margie went on her way undisturbed, and made no advances to either party, what they thought was of no importance. Margie herself gloried in the thing, and was at the same time conscious that she had been a traitor.

"I never pretended to be perfect," she said to herself. "And it was a mean way to treat Will Holmes."

Marcia was large-minded enough to respect her. The trick was precisely what she would have played in Margie's place. Like Margie, Marcia liked a foe who would hit back, and hit hard. And it was a matter of pride with her that a girl had done what the boys hadn't thought of doing. By the end of a week they were on studying-together terms again.

They were all in the same drawing class. Margie drew well, but not accurately. Her Junior sketch of a tall, black bottle and an

earthenware jar hung on the wall of the studio beside Marcia's five designs for linoleum and dress goods. It was in charcoal, and textures and high lights were good. It had, besides, an air of what the girls called "tartness." Margie could draw flowers and landscapes, but in the Senior year one worked from casts. Her first task that autumn was to draw in crayon a bi-laterally symmetrical cast of a conventionalized acanthus leaf. Glenda, who detested drawing, worked at the same thing, and neither of them made any headway. Margie could not draw two things alike. Glenda took surreptitious measurements with a slip of paper, but Margie sat in full view of the teacher. The bi-laterally symmetrical acanthus filled her with loathing.

"It isn't natural for anything to be alike on both sides," she said to Glenda. "No two things in the world are exactly alike."

"Aren't people's faces the same on both sides?" Glenda asked.

"No," said Margie. "Just look at a full-face photograph, half at a time, and you'll see."

Glenda tried it on a picture of Margie she had in her desk.

"You're two-faced," she said. "One corner of your mouth is grinning and the other is mournful."

"Everybody's face is that way," said Margie.

"I just know these casts are made half at a time and stuck together."

"I don't see any sense in our trying to do what nature can't do," said Glenda. "Let's get excused and join the Life Class."

An inability to draw a bi-laterally symmetrical design, however, did not commend itself to the drawing teacher as a reason for promoting them to the Life Class, and she refused to argue the matter with Glenda. The acanthus ended Margie's career as an artist. Seven weeks of it crushed her ambition to become an illustrator of the stories she meant to write. She dropped drawing and substituted zoology, where one had merely to draw insects and the lower orders of bi-laterally asymmetrical things.

Marcia was in the Life Class, and knew a good deal about pictures. There was an exhibition of Verestchagin's pictures in St. Anthony that fall, and Marcia suggested making up a party to go over to see them. The matter came up about the study table in the library one Monday afternoon after school.

"Do you want to go?" Walter asked Margie.

"I think it would be splendid," she said.

"All right, then," said Walter. "I'll drive and we'll all go."

"All" meant the group about the table, Margie and Glenda and Marcia and Harry Parker.

"We'll have to go some day this week," said Marcia. "The exhibition closes Friday."

"Oh, we can get Miss Marshall to excuse us," said Walter. "I'll ask her and we can go Thursday."

Miss Marshall granted the leave of absence when Walter mentioned a party. When she learned the size of the party she said something about it being selfish to make the party so small.

"That's all that can go in my rig," Walter explained.

"Why not let some of the others chip in and hire a 'bus?" said Miss Marshall.

Walter went to Margie with this suggestion, and Margie and Glenda and Marcia objected.

"We don't want a crowd," said Glenda.

Miss Marshall took occasion in the History Class to mention selfishness as a thing to be avoided. Wednesday the class in Composition recited to her. Marcia handed in a brief essay on Ruskin. Glenda had one on Chivalry. Margie's was on Selfishness.

"Selfishness," said she, "is the only motive that ever actuates anybody. Everybody wants to be happy. This is a selfish desire. Charitable people take a delight in giving to the poor. This is selfishness in them, because they do it in order to be happy. Selfishness is conscience. We cannot be happy if we do wrong, so we selfishly resolve to be good. Generosity is one form of

selfishness, and stinginess is another. A man gives up his life for a friend and takes a selfish pleasure in it. Religion is another form of selfishness. People are religious because they want to save their souls. We never hear of any one selling his soul to make life pleasant for others. Honor is selfishness. Some kinds of selfishness are pleasanter to live with than others, but there is no such thing as unselfishness."

Miss Marshall's comment on this was that the style of it was bad, and it violated several rules of rhetoric.

The expedition for St. Anthony, however, set off Thursday morning from the side entrance nearest the Senior room, for her benefit, instead of from the front entrance, where there was a horse block.

Walter had a splendid team, and a two-seated barouche. He drove, with Margie beside him, and Harry sat between Marcia and Glenda on the back seat. It was a cold day, but bright, and Walter had fur robes. The girls had brought lunch, but Walter stopped at a confectioner's to buy a large box of bon-bons. Harry wanted to pay for it, but Walter insisted that this was his party. Harry bought a horn, and, after a few frantic leaps, the horses ceased to mind it.

They tooted up the street leading to the upper town, drove along the avenue at the edge of the bluff, till the houses grew fewer and fewer, and

the pavement ended. The road led straight away across the level country, through suburban towns and farm land, to the river crossing. It was a ten-mile drive. They all talked at once, and laughed and sang till their throats felt stiff.

"Put up the horn, Harry," Marcia ordered as they drew near the bridge beyond which lay St. Anthony.

"Let me wake 'em up just once."

He blew a savage blast, that struck the horses like a whip. They broke into a gallop, heading straight for the bridge approach. Only a hand-rail of wood guarded it at the side. Below that, it fell away sharply to the rocks at the river's edge. Margie's first impulse was to cling to Walter.

"Sit still," was all he said.

She leaned away from him to give him more room, and held on tight. Nobody screamed.

"Steady, boys, steady now," Walter said, quietly.

The horses swerved toward the side of the road. The carriage tilted. One wheel grazed the railing.

"Steady now, steady," Walter said.

Margie felt the real Walter as never before. He was strong and he would bring them through safe. He leaned forward, and for the first time gave a savage wrench at the lines. It jerked the horses' heads back, and they lost their grip on

the bits. They stopped running. At the other side of the bridge Walter brought them to a standstill. Then he sprang down and went to their heads. Margie thought they looked ashamed. Walter stroked their noses, and they seemed to be trying to apologize. Walter himself was not in the slightest degree ruffled. All he said was:

“Darn that horn.”

And all Harry answered, mopping his forehead, was:

“Gee whiz!”

The girls were decidedly shaken. Harry declared that Marcia and Glenda had hugged him till he felt like a jelly, and the girls denied this indignantly. They disputed the point all the way into the city. Walter suggested going somewhere for lunch.

“We’ve just had lunch,” said Glenda.

“I know,” he said, “but it wasn’t filling. Let’s go get some real grub.”

They drove to a restaurant. The girls chose chocolate eclairs and ice-cream. Walter ordered for himself and Harry chops and fried potatoes, and ate with hearty satisfaction. Afterwards they went to a livery stable and put up the horses. Then they walked over to the Art Gallery.

The pictures were of battlefields strewn with dead and dying, of Sepoys blown from the mouths of cannon, and of starved men long dead.

It was a veritable charnel house, and the girls and Harry made merry over this and that. Only Marcia attempted to speak as a connoisseur. Half-way down the gallery Walter turned back suddenly and walked quickly out.

"What's the matter with old Walt?" asked Harry.

"I thought he looked sick," said Margie. "I'll go and see."

She found Walter in the anteroom. He was sitting in a corner and his face was white.

"What is the matter?" she asked, going over to him.

He reached out and caught her hand. She could feel that his hand was cold and it trembled.

"Was it the horses?" she asked.

He looked up at her with horror in his eyes.

"Those awful pictures!" he said. "It made me faint to look at them. Let's stay out here."

He held her hand for a few moments. Then he laughed feebly.

"I'm an awful fool about things," he said. "Don't tell Harry."

"Of course not," said Margie. She could not understand feeling faint over pictures. They were only canvas and paint.

Walter's color had come back when the rest of the party joined them.

Harry began to talk of what they had seen,

"Don't let us talk about them," said Margie. "They were so ghastly."

"Shall we start home now?" asked Glenda.

"No," said Harry. "Let's go shopping."

The first place they went into was a drug store. Harry walked up to the clerk and asked if he had any fresh eggs in stock.

"No," said the clerk in surprise. "This is a drug store."

"Oh," said Harry, politely, "I thought eggs were a drug on the market at present. Excuse me. I'll call again."

This sent the others out of the place in a gale of laughter.

"I like to shop," said Harry. The next place was a bookstore. Harry asked for the first volume of the Cumæan Sibyl. The clerk consulted the head salesman, and reported that the book was not in stock, but that if the gentleman would give him the publisher's name it would be sent for.

"It is published by McGuffey," Harry told him. "I'll call again."

They suppressed their giggles till they were in the street again, and Harry set out to look for a log-chain at a jeweler's. Finding they had no such thing, he said souvenir spoons would do as well. The girls protested against accepting the gifts.

"If you don't, I'll lie down on the floor and

holler and cry," said Harry. "I can't bear to be crossed."

So, amid great glee, the spoons were bought and presented. The girls then insisted on buying flowers for the boys. This took another hour, and was great fun. Margie thought it was time to go home then.

"We'd better wait here and have dinner," said Walter, "and go home by moonlight. If we start now, we'd get home too late for dinner."

The girls demurred at this. What would their mothers think if they were not home before dark?

"I can fix that," said Walter. "I'll telegraph to them."

The telegrams were all alike.

"Your daughter will be home to-night. I will take care of her. Don't worry. We are having a great time."

Marcia and Margie were a little fearful as to the propriety of driving home after dark, but Glenda wanted to stay.

"Walter can take care of us," she said. "My mother won't worry. I want to see what kind of chicken salad they have at the Hennepin."

The Hennepin was the largest hotel in St. Anthony. It seemed to Margie a frightful extravagance on Walter's part to take them there,

and she urged him just to buy some things they could eat on the road home.

"I don't think you ought to spend so much," she said.

"Why not?" asked Walter. "We ought to have a hot dinner, oughtn't we?"

"But the Hennepin is so expensive," she urged.

"Father gave me thirty dollars to blow in on this, and I'm going to blow it all," said Walter.

So they dined royally, and Harry set them to laughing so hard that they were afraid people would look at them, by calling for a cup with the handle on the left side, and puzzling the waiter.

They drove home under the full moon, and sang till the beauty of the night silenced them. Harry went to sleep and Marcia and Glenda prodded him to keep him awake. Margie was sleepy, too, and Walter nodded.

"Poke me if I start to fall out," he said.

The horses knew the way.

Margie's house was the nearest. Walter helped her out of the carriage, and it was good to see the light stream out when the hall door opened. It was good, too, to hear the boys and girls shouting "Good-night" till the horses carried them out of hearing. It was all such a good time to think about before one dropped off to sleep.

On Friday Miss Marshall called Marcia and Glenda to her separately. She asked Margie to wait and speak to her after school.

"I am sorry," she said, "to be obliged to speak of such a thing, but it cannot be allowed to pass unnoticed."

Margie wondered blankly.

"I mean your trip to St. Anthony," Miss Marshall went on. "I think you are the one most to blame."

"For what?" asked Margie in astonishment.

"For keeping the girls over there, dining at a hotel, and coming home late at night with the boys."

Margie stood speechless.

"You were the ringleader. Walter wouldn't have stayed if you hadn't wanted to."

"Miss Marshall," said Margie, "I don't mean to be impertinent, but I do think what I do out of school is my mother's affair!"

"You went during school hours."

"But staying wasn't in school hours. I don't see anything wrong in what we did."

"I do," said Miss Marshall. "The whole thing is regrettable, but I should not have brought it up if that were all."

"What else is there?" asked Margie, angrily.

"Your general attitude. You have great influence over Walter, and you do not use it in the right way. You oppose me in any way you can."

"I don't know what you mean," said Margie.

"You do know. I mean Glenda, for one thing. I mean other things. You are an unruly spirit, Margaret."

Margie did not answer.

"I have thought sometimes," Miss Marshall went on, "that something must have happened to you to make you bitter. You are trying always to hit back at something. You meant that essay on Selfishness as a slap at me."

"I know I did," said Margie. "I was out of temper. But about staying over in St. Anthony, I really wasn't any more to blame than anybody else. We had no idea of anything but having a good time. And now"—Margie's voice broke in spite of herself—"now it isn't a good time, and I haven't had any too many to remember."

Miss Marshall did not speak for some time.

"Perhaps I was wrong," she said at length. "I don't want to hurt you. I wanted merely to come to an understanding with you."

"Things were all right till that time about Clara Holcomb," said Margie.

"I admit I was wrong about that. Marcia gave me a wrong impression—not intentionally, I think, but she gave it nevertheless. It isn't so much what you do, Margaret, as it is the things you make me feel. Don't you think we can understand each other better?"

"I don't understand anybody," said Margie.
"I never did."

"Did you ever really try?"

"I think I have. I think I've wanted to," said Margie, slowly.

"I'd like you to feel friendly toward me," said Miss Marshall. "I wish I could explain how it looks to me, but I find I can't."

"You muddle me all up talking that way," said Margie, desperately.

"Were you ever very fond of anybody?"

Margie did not reply immediately.

"Yes, I was. That's why."

"It was why with me once, too," said Miss Marshall. "It's a common why."

There was another pause.

"Come, now, Margaret," said Miss Marshall, "we've had it out. Let's start in and do differently. Don't hold out against me any more. I declare, sometimes, when I run up against an opinion of yours in the history class, I get mad enough to slap you."

They both laughed.

"You see, I have to teach generally accepted opinions in everything. I cannot get the class through at all if you and Glenda insist on having opinions of your own. You can have them, but do keep them to yourselves. You muddle the whole class."

"I didn't know it made much difference," said

Margie. "I just like to hear Glenda. But, Miss Marshall, you really don't think it was wrong of us to stay last night, do you? We didn't do it at all to be mean."

"Not like starting off from the side door?"

"That was mean, but it was a kid trick. We didn't think about you again the whole time we were gone."

Miss Marshall smiled.

"Oh, well," she said, "just let it go on being a good time to remember, then. I wish I hadn't spoken of it. But I think we do understand each other now."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE REAL MARCIA.

IN November the General Debating Society sent a challenge to the St. Anthony High School to join in debate. The question, and the time and place of debate, to be settled by the challenged. There was no question under the sun that Centropolis felt unable to win on. St. Anthony accepted. The debate was to be in St. Anthony's Assembly Hall, on the last Friday before school closed for the Christmas holidays, and the question: "Resolved, That the Government should own railway and telegraph systems." Lots were drawn and the affirmative fell to Centropolis. Great was the excitement in Centropolis.

"We'll lick them out of their boots again, as we did last year," said Sam Willis.

Sam was, unquestionably, the best debater in school, and he knew it. Tom Newhouse was a more subtle reasoner, and Harry had more humor, but Sam struck out harder from the shoulder. He had a big voice, too, and Tom's was languid. Sam took it for granted that he

would lead in the debate. He took it for granted, too, that Margie would be his second. She had never been on the losing side in a debate, and she had been the only girl to oppose St. Anthony the year before. It was her right to be his second. They discussed the matter together before the Committee on Debaters brought in their report.

"It seems an awfully hard subject to debate on," Margie said.

"We'll have to read up a lot and study things," said Sam.

"What ought we to read?" she asked.

"There ought to be some Congressional reports on interstate commerce that would help," said Sam. "Do you think we could write to the Congressman of this district?"

"I know we could," said Margie. "And my mother's uncle is in the Senate. I could write to him. He'd send us any reports there are, I think."

"Bully!" said Sam. "I can get at state reports. We'll have a lot of work to do, but we'll knock St. Anthony over the fence and out."

Her letter reached the white-haired old Senator in Washington early in December. It came up Capitol Hill in a covered wagon marked "Senate Mail." It was handled by the Senate Postmaster and tied up with official pink tape with the rest of Senator Gordon's mail. A mes-

senger carried it to the Senator's secretary, in the room of the Committee on Civil Service and Retrenchment. The committee was in session, but personal letters were always handed to the Senator as soon as they came. Margie had marked hers "Important."

"Excuse me a moment, gentlemen," said the chairman, "a matter of important business."

"Dear Uncle John," Margie wrote. "Has the Government ever published any reports that would help us in a debate on Railways? I thought, perhaps, somebody had made some speech or introduced some bill that we might use. I shall be very much obliged if you will let me know as soon as you can. We have the affirmative, and we expect to win."

The Senator read it to the committee.

"I must consult with the Chairman of the Committee on Interstate Commerce immediately," he said. "Gentlemen, let us adjourn."

And the Chairman of the Committee on Pacific Railways was consulted. The Chairman on Post-Office and Post Roads offered his assistance; the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs offered his, too. The Chairman of the Committee on Revision of Laws of the United States took an interest in the matter; so did the Chairman of the Committee on Finance,

and the Chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means, and many another chairman. It was a relief to them all to let somebody else shoulder responsibilities for a while. The General Debating Society would point out exactly what the Government ought to do.

And the Government sent the documents to Margie free of post-office charges. They were all marked "Official Business."

Louis Horton appointed Marcia chairman of the Committee on Debaters. She came to Margie to talk over the different girls who could debate.

"There's Glenda," she said.

"Yes, and Ruth Webster," said Margie. "She debated second to me last month in the Utile Dulce, and she went straight to the point."

"I know," said Marcia. "We'll have five in the after-debate, and two leaders. We want to choose carefully."

"Miss Marshall ought to be able to tell who's good at writing," said Margie.

"I'll consult with her," Marcia replied.

It was three days later that the names of debaters were announced to the society at a meeting after school. Two of these days Margie had been absent, but on the third she was able to attend the meeting. She went in with Glenda, and sat with the rest of the girls. The first business of the meeting was the committee's report.

"Mr. President," said Marcia, "this committee has considered the matter of selection of debaters carefully, and has made the choice. For leader we have selected Sam Willis."

There was unanimous cheering at that.

"And for second"—Margie's heart beat fast—"Ruth Webster."

There was an instant of utter silence, and then moderate applause.

Walter sprang to his feet.

"Mr. President," he said, "I don't think we ought to accept any such report. I think the best debater in school has been left out."

"I object to the report, Mr. President," said Harry. "I think the committee should consider the matter again."

"Mr. President," said Marcia, "I wish to say that we have left it to the two leaders to choose five speakers for the after-debate. The after-debate is important, but we have thought best to choose as leaders debaters who—who rely on logical argument rather than on an appeal to—"

Margie rose.

"Mr. President," she said, and her voice sounded strange to her, "I move that the report of the committee be accepted without debate."

"I second the motion," said a Senior girl.

Margie was stunned. She had never for a moment doubted that she would be Sam's second.

For a year she had looked forward to it. Nothing had ever happened to shake her belief. It was her right. She had never lost a debate. She felt that people were looking at her, and she hung on desperately to her self-control. The thunderbolt had fallen from a clear sky. To get away and hide was now her one thought.

Glenda kept saying that the committee had shown no sense. Clara Holcomb was waiting to express her sympathy. Sam followed her out of the hall when the meeting was adjourned, after half an hour of torture to her.

"It's a burning shame," he said. "I wanted you to be my second. You'll be leader in the after-debate, anyway. I promise you that."

Margie dared not speak. She went on down the stairs, and to the cloak-room for her cloak and hat. Girls spoke to her, she remembered afterward, and she did not know what answers she made.

"I have the horse here," said Walter. "Don't you want to go downtown and get some candy?"

Margie's lip quivered.

"Please take me straight home," she said.

Walter did not speak again till they reached her house. Then, as he held out his hand to help her down from the cart, he said:

"Don't mind it, honey."

Margie remembered that mother and Betty had gone to Greenville to spend the day and

night. The Swedish maid-of-all-work opened the door for her.

"Ae tank you bane seek," she said.

"I am," said Margie. "Don't call me for dinner."

She ran up to her room and locked the door. Then she flung herself on the floor and gave way. There was no one to hear or see. She struck the floor with her clenched hands.

"I can't bear it!" she sobbed. "I can't bear it! I've looked forward to it a whole year!"

Living had been so comfortable. She had been going on so steadily, making herself somebody in the school. Everything had been leading up to this debate. For a whole year she had looked forward to it. Her overthrow was complete.

"I can't bear it!" she cried. "It doesn't leave me anything. It's always been like this—Fred and Julia—I've never had what I wanted. They've hit me when I couldn't hit back. I can't bear it. They saw—I showed it. Why did you let me look forward to it for a whole year, God? You knew I wasn't in things out of school. I don't belong anywhere. Why couldn't you let me have this, God? I've worked hard for it. What did I ever do to you?"

One by one the lashes of it stung her. Everybody must have known she expected to be chosen. Sam had talked of it.

"And it wasn't swelled head," she said. "I can debate. I always win. It can't be just luck. The only time Ruth Webster ever debated was second to me. I can't go on now. I can't speak in the after-debate. I did that a whole year ago."

All her life rose before her, a failure. She thought of Julia and of Fred. Neither of them had wanted her. And she had not even made herself somebody.

"I'm not eighteen yet, and I've got to live to be old. I can't go on. I can't bear it."

The afternoon wore away. She got up from the floor after she had exhausted herself, and took the fan Fred had written his name on from the doll's trunk. She held it as she sat by the window looking out at the dusk. She had a numb feeling of being alone in the world. The things she had wanted had always gone away into the west and left her in the dark. She had never found the way to be near anybody. She sat there looking out for a long, long time.

The doorbell below rang. She thought it might be Walter, and she did not want to see him. She opened her door to listen, and heard Marcia asking for her.

"She has come to see how I take it," she thought. "I won't go down. I can't. I wish I could kill her. She did it all."

The Swedish maid came up to tell her Marcia had asked for her.

"Say I'll be down presently," Margie said.

"I will," she thought. "I will. I'll find a way to hit back. She won't know I've been crying if the light isn't very bright."

She washed her face and brushed her hair, and went down, head high.

She thought Marcia looked uncomfortable as they shook hands.

"Aren't you feeling well?" Marcia asked.

"My head aches a little," said Margie.

There was an awkward pause.

"That isn't the truth," she said, suddenly. "I've been crying because you left me out of the debate."

"I didn't know you'd care so much," said Marcia.

"You saw I cared when I heard that report. I showed it then," said Margie.

"You didn't show it," said Marcia. "I was surprised that you didn't seem to care a bit. I thought, perhaps, you looked at it as Miss Marshall did."

"Oh, so Miss Marshall——"

"I'll tell you the whole truth," said Marcia. "I wanted to be leader in the debate more than I ever wanted anything else, but I was chairman of the committee, and nobody in it ever mentioned me. I made up my mind if I couldn't have the honor, I'd keep you from getting it. You've had more than your share. You've

beaten me twice in debate, and you've got better marks than I did in Latin, and they printed your serial in the *World* and rejected mine."

"I never knew that," said Margie.

"Well, it's true. So when we talked with Miss Marshall about what girl to choose, she told us to let Ruth Webster be leader, and I agreed with her."

"What did she say against me?"

"It wasn't exactly against you," said Marcia. "She said, to begin with, that the subject wasn't one that you could handle well. You know you don't like political economy."

"I always get sleepy in class," Margie admitted.

"She said you wouldn't present plain facts so convincingly as Ruth would. Ruth would bone up on it more thoroughly than you would."

"I think I could have debated it as well as Ruth."

"Ruth isn't to debate," said Marcia. "She is merely to present points. Miss Marshall said you'd be worth more to us as an after-debate speaker than as a leader. Wait, now, and I'll tell you why. You think quick, and you speak *extempore* well. You can always answer back. You won from me once because you made me so mad I forgot what I intended to say. Miss Marshall said you'd be the very person for leader if the audience was to judge. You can

convince a crowd, but Miss Marshall says you don't do it with arguments."

"Anything else Miss Marshall had the kindness to say?" Margie asked, half-sneeringly.

"No, only she had no idea you would rather be leader than leader in the after-debate. That's the truth. She thought you'd feel freer as it is. She said you wouldn't enjoy getting up a long, difficult paper on the subject, because it wasn't a thing you cared about."

"I didn't care what the subject was. I wanted to debate."

"I know you did," Marcia replied. "I agreed with Miss Marshall because—because I wanted to. The rest of the committee wanted you till she explained just what you are as a debater. There's truth in what she said."

Margie did not speak. She knew there was truth in it. The question of railways and telegraphs had not appealed to her. It seemed dry.

"I had a cry, too, Margaret," said Marcia. "I wanted to be leader—wanted awfully."

"And you wanted to hit back at me?"

"Yes; but I didn't mean to hit so hard, and I didn't expect to feel mean about it. I thought you'd just be mad, and go ahead in the after-debate."

"I couldn't speak in that now to save my soul," said Margie. "Do you know what I thought

when you came? I thought you came just to see how I took it."

"That was why I came," Marcia said, frankly. "If you had pretended you didn't care, I was going to rub it in. I didn't know—well, you made me feel mighty mean by not pretending."

"I couldn't pretend," said Margie. "I was hurt too badly to hide it."

"I'd feel lots better if you had said you didn't care."

"I don't care now so much as I did," said Margie. "I reckon I'll get over it. But how can I get out of speaking in that after-debate?"

"Say you have a sore throat," said Marcia. "Will you help me get up my speech?"

"If I can, I will, but I wouldn't help Ruth for anything on earth."

"I wouldn't, either," said Marcia. "Are you going to try to get even with me for this?"

Margie thought it over.

"I don't believe I am. I wouldn't have let you be leader if I'd been on the committee. I hate to let anybody get ahead of me."

"I do, too," said Marcia. "I'm not going to tattle about this. You rubbed that in to me good and hard."

"I tattled myself," Margie admitted.

"Nobody knows you care a bit," said Marcia. "They won't find out from me. I do feel awfully mean."

"Oh, let's not talk of it," said Margie. "I won't feel bad very long. I never do. Have you got your Virgil for to-morrow?"

"No," said Marcia. "Let's study it. We've got an Eclogue to scan. I missed this morning on that. *Nec sum adeo informis. Nuper me in litore vidi.* How was it you scanned it?"

"You forgot to make 'nuper' a spondee, and to elide. It goes this way: 'Nec s'ade' informis. Nuper m'in litore vidi.'"

"And you knew that line Papa Brown asked for. The one he said sounds like horses galloping. How did you know? You don't have any trouble at all in Latin," said Marcia.

"I knew that line because my father told me years ago. *Quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit angula campum.* It's such a splendid line. I wouldn't have known if I hadn't been told. I like poetry."

"Tennyson?" asked Marcia, with a smile.

"No," said Margie, smiling back. "I think that 'Poet's Song' the silliest thing I know."

Margie sat by her window after Marcia had gone. She felt melancholy, but no longer bitter. Somehow the sting of the thing was gone. She had made a failure as a debater, but she knew why. She put the fan with Fred's name on it under her pillow. The why of that failure she did not know.

It was hard when the reports came from

Washington. She gave them to Sam, and she hoped that Ruth Webster would make a complete and utter failure. She was glad to give what help she could to Marcia, and Marcia didn't tattle. Till the very day before the debate even, Sam thought Margie was preparing for the after-debate. She announced the sore throat then, and spoke in a hoarse whisper.

When they set off for St. Anthony, on the 22d of December, every one of them decorated with school colors, Margie found herself excited. She really hoped Centropolis would win. They went by rail this time, and they shouted the school yell as they marched into the St. Anthony Assembly Hall. As to the debate, it seemed to her dull and dry. She acknowledged to herself that she would not have been content to present simple facts as Ruth Webster did. She would have wanted to say things she could break loose on. It was not interesting to her till the after-debate came. Then she saw several points she might have made, and whispered them to Marcia. It was give and take in the after-debate.

The whole thing bored Walter.

"You would have livened it up," he said to Margie.

"Yes, but I wouldn't have argued it up," she said, and meant what she said.

The girl leader for St. Anthony had the last

speech of all, in summing up for the negative. She was flushed as she stepped out on the platform. After a line or two she began to repeat words vaguely.

Walter jumped up and ran down the aisle. She toppled over in a faint just as he reached her.

"I wonder if Walter never fails," Margie thought. "It must be because he never thinks about himself."

The incident created a stir, and as the girl was not able to continue her speech, Centropolis insisted that St. Anthony choose two other speakers to sum up. They wanted the fight to be fair. They were even magnanimous enough not to cheer when the decision of the judges was announced. It was in their favor, but they kept silent till they reached the street. Then they shouted themselves hoarse all the way to the train. Margie shouted, too. Her school had won. She congratulated Sam and Marcia, but she avoided Ruth till they reached Centropolis, and then she vented her spite.

Outside the station the Van Gelder sleigh, glittering and fine, with a man in livery and furs on the box, was waiting. Margie had already asked Walter to drive Marcia home. Now, she turned to Ruth.

"Oh, Walter," she said, "wouldn't there be room to take Ruth home, too?"

And then she congratulated Ruth.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A SPLENDID WORLD.

MARGIE wrote Major Winchester a long letter about the matter of the debate.

"I was hit hard," she said. "And I suppose it was good for me. I did have a swelled head. I don't know why I'm not angry with Miss Marshall, but I'm not. I reckon she knows me better than I know myself. I read something in George Eliot the other day about a woman who suffered not so much from her own unhappiness as from the thought of it, or something like that. Perhaps I'm that way, and don't feel all I think I feel."

And she told him of Walter and the Verestchagin pictures.

"Walter never seems to think about himself. I can't help doing it. I never get myself off my mind at all. I never did but once, and that was when I took ether. You can't think with other people's minds nor see with their eyes. You're born alone and live alone and die alone. All I have found out yet is that I am on my own mind less when I have plenty to do. I believe

that when this thing hit me, I went down so hard I bounced. Anyway, I'm up again. I suppose you've got to be able to bounce if you want to live at all."

Major Winchester wrote back:

"It almost makes me sorry. Just what I've been telling you all along to do, you have gone and done. You have got direction. Now all you need is the momentum that practice and thinking and waiting and age will give. Clear the track, the train is coming. Don't you wish you were a boy, so you could write to travel, and travel to write, like Bayard Taylor? 'Tis hopeless. I fear me you must fail. Your fate is sealed unless you are so wonderful you can demand whole pay, not half pay. Go on writing. Trust yourself; sun and air your vagaries. If your head is swelled, swell it till it is colossal. Read Emerson. Don't be afraid. Be something big—even being a big fool is better than being nothing. What have you to write about? Can you take hold of the longest nose in the world and pull it out an inch longer (as Dickens did) on paper, and thereby make to yourself Fame? The most real things in life are our dreams. We require so much of friends that none are extant to fill the bill. You will always be alone. We all are. I like your Walter boy. Leave him as

you found him. Make up to him for what some other woman will do to him afterward."

It was not long after that that a little note came to her from Major Winchester.

"Go on, my dear," it said. "Never give in. Love, if you can. Hate, too, and be honest. I am going to find out things. Maybe I'll find somebody I knew a great many years ago—somebody I have thought you were like. It is a splendid world, this. I am glad I have known it. Good-night, my dear friend."

Major Winchester was dead almost before the note reached Margie. She kept his letters as long as she kept the fan Fred had written his name on, and longer. He left to her the collar of his dog, and that, too, she kept among her souvenirs. It was the last parcel his hands tied up. She thought of Major Winchester always as having found out things. Like Walter, he had never been afraid, she thought.

Somehow, Major Winchester's death gave her a new outlook. He had said it was a splendid world when he was done with it. It must be a splendid world. And it was a world in which there was a great deal to do. That was what made it splendid.

She had another class in Physical Culture in

Greenville this winter, and enjoyed teaching, though she had no illusions on the subject of her ability. She could teach calisthenics; nothing more. One of her pupils was a tall, awkward girl of fifteen, named Mary Blair. Mary went through the exercises faithfully, but she still carried herself badly, and her head was always thrust forward awkwardly. No setting-up drill seemed to help her. Margie read all she could find in the Public Library on the subject of Physical Culture, but nothing proved to be a help in Mary's case. Her chest did not broaden, and her shoulder-blades stuck out painfully. Telling her to throw her shoulders back merely made her thrust her chin out. The other girls in the class were healthy, merry girls, who took no particular interest in the lessons. They were a little afraid of Margie, and kept perfect order after she had turned the sharp edge of her tongue on them once. Poor, gawky Mary was deeply in earnest.

She came to the station to meet Margie one day. Margie had been thinking of herself at the awkward age, and Mary reminded her of herself at fifteen.

"You make me think of the way I was at your age, Mary," she said as they walked toward the hall where the class met. "I was as tall as I am now, and I used to shrink so I wouldn't look so long drawn out."

"I wish I wasn't so tall," said Mary. "It's awful."

"Why?" Margie asked. "You ought to be glad. It makes you so much nearer the stars."

She looked at Mary to see how this impressed her. Mary seemed interested.

"I never thought of that," she said.

"Did you ever try feeling you were fastened to a star by the centre of your chest when you walk?"

Mary looked at her shyly.

"We're kin to the stars, you know," Margie went on. "We really are tied to them that way. You want to try to get the top of your head as close to them as you can. It makes you walk better."

"Better than wand drill?" Mary asked.

"Wand drill doesn't do anything but give you muscle and quickness and wind," said Margie. "What you walk with is the feeling inside you—the feeling about stars."

Mary was fifteen, and she answered:

"I see what you mean. Nobody ever talked—plain like that to me before."

A little later she said:

"Look at me now, Miss Carlin. Don't I hold myself better now?"

"Yes, you do," said Margie. "Your chest is out and your chin is in."

"And the top of my head is as near the stars

as I can get it," said Mary, delightedly. "Oh, it's easy to do when you don't have to remember about holding your chin in or your shoulders back, or anything hard like that. They've made so much fun of me at home because I stand in such a clumsy way. But now I know how to stand up. They won't make fun now. I'll never forget what you said about the stars. You've shown me the way out."

Margie stood stock still for a moment.

The way out! Did everybody feel that way?

"Do you ever get unhappy, and discouraged, and feel that you're all alone in an ugly, unkind world, Mary?"

"Yes," said Mary. "I wish I was dead lots of times. You never do, do you?"

"Everybody does," said Margie. "But it isn't an ugly world, and we're not alone. It's a splendid world with stars over it."

Late that night, on the train, as she went back to Centropolis, she talked to Major Winchester.

"I'm glad you told me," she said; "it's a splendid world."

The conductor spoke to her as the train neared Centropolis. He was a pleasant-looking, elderly man, and Margie had traveled in his train a great many times, but she had never talked with him. Her name he knew, of course. It was written in her ticket-book.

"Will somebody meet you, Miss Carlin?" he asked.

"My father usually meets me," she answered.

"The train is so late. I thought maybe you wouldn't find anyone at the depot. My run ends here, and I could see you safely to the street-car."

Margie was touched.

"Oh, thank you," she said. "If father isn't there I'll come back and tell you. I'm sure he'll be there. It's ever so kind of you, though."

"Not at all," said the conductor. "My daughter goes to your school. She talks about you a great deal. She's a Fourth."

"What's her name?"

"Elizabeth Morgan."

Margie had never heard the name before.

"She says you showed her how to find things in the Encyclopædia in the library one day when she first started to school. She's never forgotten it."

Margie could not recall the incident, but she took pains to find out, after that, who the girl was, and spoke to her when they met in the halls. It had never been her habit to speak first to anyone before.

"It does seem pleasanter to speak to everybody," she thought. She noticed that Florence Hawley did it.

There was work at the Centropolis High

School, but there was play, too. The Juniors and Seniors were free to use the Assembly Hall for class parties now and then. All that was required of them was a small fee for the gas. When they wanted to dance they waxed the floor with candles, appropriated from the laboratory, and took turns at the piano. No class meeting for the discussion of a proposed entertainment was ever held without a speech from Walter. He would always rise seriously and say: "Mr. President, I think we ought to have grub."

Having grub meant spending money from the class treasury, and as the end of the school year began to loom up, '90 grew economical. Commencement expenses would be heavy. When Walter proposed having refreshments at the St. Valentine's Day party, he was voted down.

It was a splendid party. The boys hired a street piano and a man to grind it, as a surprise to the girls. The girls had valentines for the boys, as their surprise. It was Marcia's idea. She painted little sketches on twenty cards, and Margie wrote a verse on each. Some of the verses were original, and some quotations, and there was a good-natured hit at every one. What made them sound so well was the way Glenda read them as she delivered them. Glenda was Cupid. The girls dressed her in a red-and-yellow kimono, left in the property closet behind the stage, and put a mortar-board cap on her

head. Mabel Rohlfs suggested wings, which they hewed out of large pasteboard boxes. They were tied to Glenda by coils and coils of clothes-line, and a string fastened to the edge of each ended in a loop around her thumb. Glenda made her entrance with her usual utterly serious face, hopping along in imitation of a robin, the wings flapping at each hop. Even Miss Marshall and Mr. Harmon shrieked with laughter at the sight.

"You ought to be class poet, Margaret," said Marcia, when the last of the valentines had been read.

"I'd rather be prophet if the class will let me," said Margie. "What do you want to be?"

"I want to be historian. I'm glad we don't want the same thing."

"So am I. I hope nobody wants any part that anybody else wants."

"Except the Commencement prize," said Marcia.

"We all want that," Margie replied. "I know I do. But it won't kill me if I don't get it."

Walter came up just then.

"We've got ice-cream in Papa Brown's room," he said, "but Tom can't get it out of the molds."

"Did he set them on the radiator a minute?" Marcia asked.

"No," said Walter, "we never thought of

that. You'd better come along, you and Margaret, and help."

Tom accepted the help.

"The feminine mind grasps these things better than the masculine intelligence. It was Walt's fool idea to surprise you. If I'd known he was going to do it, I'd have told him to get canned ice cream. These statuary things stick," he said.

"Shut up," said Walter.

"You paid for it all, Walter; I know you did," said Margie.

"You're the best old thing," said Marcia.

"I thought we ought to have grub," Walter explained. "And I jewed the man down. He took off a lot when I said I'd send the molds back."

"But why didn't you get plain ice-cream?" Margie asked. "These molded things cost a lot more."

"Do they?" asked Walter. "By Jinks, the man did me. He never told me that. It's all strawberry, too."

"Why on earth didn't you get several kinds?" asked Marcia.

"Strawberry is more chewy," said Walter.

"Go and send some more girls in," Margie ordered. "Tom can stay and wipe off the dishes, and we'll set things on the desks."

Tom's lofty spirit bent itself humbly to the

task. He dusted the plates carefully with a fresh eraser.

It was a very grand supper, strawberry ice-cream and lady-fingers. Tom was toast-master, and everybody made a speech. They were all splendid speeches. Mr. Harmon made the funniest of all. Walter's speech was short and to the point.

"Fellow-beings," he said, "I know I shall dream of pink ice-cream."

"That's enough," cried Tom. "If Walt is going to drop into poetry, we'll never see our homes again."

"I didn't drop," said Walter.

"You soared," said Harry. "Your heart was touched. The ice-cream went to your head. Let us now dance. We are encouraging that organ grinder in slothfulness."

Miss Marshall danced and Mr. Harmon danced, and even "Papa" Brown, who came in, was dragged out on the floor. And because some of the boys could not waltz, they danced Virginia reels, and Mr. Harmon stamped the floor when "Papa" Brown and Glenda went prancing down the line. After that they sang, and the way Sam rumbled out the bass in "There Were Three Buzzing Bumblebees" was magnificent. Mr. Harmon sang "Lauriger Horatius," and they all shouted out the chorus lustily. At eleven Miss Marshall suggested "Home, Sweet Home."

Everybody knew the first verse, and after that they sang "Tum-ti-tum" or "Da-da-da" till they came to the refrain. Margie did not think of Gordonsville. Home was not a place. This was her class and her school.

As they went out Miss Marshall said to her: "This is a good time to remember."

And Margie answered: "It's a splendid world."

The selection of speakers for Class Day came soon after that. June was months away, but Margie urged the girls to settle things early.

"If anybody is disappointed over not getting a part, there'll be time to get over it before Class Day," she said, and she made no secret of her wanting to be prophet.

Miss Marshall suggested that she be class poet.

"I'd rather be prophet," said Margie. "We've already talked about having Walter for poet."

Miss Marshall laughed.

"Why, he can't write poetry," she said. "I don't think he'd care to speak on Class Day, anyway."

"We don't care about what kind of a poem he writes," said Margie. "We want him to speak so we can clap."

"I think Mabel wants to be prophet," said Miss Marshall.

This put a new aspect on the matter. Margie went to Glenda and Marcia with it.

"We could have two prophets," Glenda suggested. "It's such a big class."

This did not please Margie.

"We'd neither of us do well then," she said. "I hate like sin to give it up."

"I'll tell you what," said Marcia. "Let's suggest a class photographer, or artist, or something like that. Mabel could make pictures of us as we are now."

"She can't draw well enough," said Glenda.

"I don't mean real pictures of us," Marcia explained. "Just funny things that hit us off. You'd be easy to do. You could be looking at a dollar bill and saying, 'I don't see any cents in it.'"

Glenda laughed.

Marcia carried the suggestion to Mabel, who was immensely pleased, and when the class met to elect the Class Day speakers, Mabel was elected class photographer and Margie prophet. Marcia had her wish to be historian, and Walter, though he insisted he couldn't write verses, was obviously delighted, because they voted for him unanimously. Harry was to make the class president's speech, Louis Horton the farewell address of the president of the Debating Society, Tom the speech of advice to the lower classes. Sam didn't want a Class Day

part, he said. He meant to concentrate his strength on an oration for the prize at Commencement.

Glenda was chosen to speak on the Boadiceans, which did not mean what it seemed to mean. The boys had a secret society, too, and the Boadiceans had surprised their secret. On Class Day Glenda would let them know for the first time that ventilation flues are excellent conductors of sound.

They selected Will Holmes to write the class song, and girls who could play or sing were set down for music. The rest of the class were put on committees. They wanted to give everybody a chance on Class Day, and nobody cared how long the programme was.

CHAPTER XXIV.

PRINCESS FORTUNATA.

THE honor of a part in the Commencement Day exercises was not bestowed by favor of the class. It was a thing one had to win from impartial judges. During the Senior year each member of '90 was required to read two essays before the school in Assembly Hall. Nobody was excused. All essays were submitted to Miss Marshall, as teacher of composition and rhetoric. She chose from the whole class of sixty, twenty-five to compete for Commencement parts. Only eight were to speak on that day.

Margie had no doubt that she would be one of the twenty-five.

"I can write better than half the class," she said.

As to being one of the eight, she was by no means so sure. The year before a girl who had never done anything had surprised everybody by winning her way, not only into the honored eight, but by walking off with the prize. You could not be sure of anything that depended on your real ability, as unbiased judges saw it.

Margie talked over her subject with her

mother and Miss Marshall. Mother never failed to have a suggestion for a subject ready. She had always helped Margie with her essays by suggesting a bit of fancy here, and a whimsical choice of words there. Miss Marshall had a list of subjects ready, with notes that gave a hint of their treatment.

“Indolence and Cowardice—at the bottom of too many of our beliefs and practices.”

“Dodging the Drops.”

“One-Eyed Men.—It is only in the kingdom of the blind that one-eyed men are kings.”

“Protracted Misery.”

“Other People’s Sins.”

“American Ideals.”

“Microscopic Eyes.”

“The Healing Power of Admiration.”

It was a long list, and nothing in it struck Margie.

“Take a subject all your own,” said Miss Marshall, “and don’t be afraid of your own opinions.”

A story in one of Major Winchester’s letters came back to Margie. He had been a prospector in California at one time, and not a successful one. At the end of three days’ search, after months of failure, his courage gave out.

“Shall I go on or turn back?” he said to himself. “I’ll toss up a penny. Heads, I go on; tails, I turn back.”

The coin fell heads up. He went on a few rods and found one of the richest veins ever discovered in California.

Margie decided to write on "The Force of Circumstances." Later, she cut the title down to the last word alone, and wrote her essay between dark and dawn that night. The sub-self held the pen. Afterward she re-wrote it, time after time, trying to better it.

"I won't be beaten in this," she thought. "I've got to win."

In the end she carried the essay to a typewriter, with scarcely a word of the first draft changed. All the essays were to be submitted to the committee of five judges, none of them teachers, but all of them persons of literary taste. No names were to be signed to the typed copies. Only Miss Marshall knew whose name the number on each stood for.

The judges spent a week over the essays. It was a time of fearful suspense for the twenty-five of '90.

"I'll make up my mind not to expect to be in the eight," Margie thought. "Being left out won't hurt so much that way. I won't be the only one left out. It won't kill me."

But she could not bring herself really to stop expecting, stop hoping, stop praying, stop wishing on loads of hay, and observing childish omens. She wore a collar wrong side out to

school all one day because she had put it on that way, and it was bad luck to change it. She begged God to let her win a place, and she wished on the first star.

"I know it's silly," she said to herself, "but maybe it isn't."

The essay, typed, had looked so dull, its sentences so awkward. There was no sound to it. The judges would look at it when it was dead, and not know at all what it was like when alive.

"I can't eat at all, I'm so worked up," Marcia said. "Can you?"

"I haven't noticed," said Margie.

"You look thinner than you did. Let's go to the gymnasium and weigh ourselves."

Margie had lost six pounds since the last weighing, a month before. Marcia had lost four. Glenda had lost nothing.

"I never did expect to get in," she said. "I hate to read essays. I don't see any sense in acting as if you were on trial for murder the way you do."

"It's worse than being tried for murder," said Marcia. "We don't know whether we're guilty or not. I woke up in the middle of the night last night, and remembered that I'd used 'generally' where it ought to have been 'usually.' It was simply awful."

"I've got one sentence in mine that makes me feel like Eugene Aram," said Margie. "I said

Galvani's fame rests on a few frog legs. I know I ought to have said frogs' legs. That would be the plural, wouldn't it? Or would it be like spoonfuls? We say horses' tails, don't we? not horse tails?"

"Don't ask me," said Marcia. "I don't know what anybody says. What I said was 'generally,' and it ought to have been 'usually.' They'll never let that get by them."

"I'm getting so I see frogs every time I shut my eyes," said Margie. "Which do you think I ought to have said—frog legs or frogs' legs, Glenda?"

"Is your essay about frogs?" Glenda asked.

"No, but I mentioned frogs."

"I'll bet you and Marcia are what's keeping the judges so long," Glenda said. "They can't decide which of you ought to be killed first."

The judges sent in their list next day. The class met to hear Mr. Harmon read the names of the successful eight.

"I know I didn't get in," Margie kept saying to herself. "I know I didn't. I didn't expect it."

And the sub-self kept saying: "It's things you don't expect that happen."

Mr. Harmon had not the heart to torture them. They all sat so still and tense, their souls looking through their eyes.

"Oh God, let me win," Margie was saying.

"I don't expect to. Please let me. I'm sure I won't."

Marcia twisted her fingers in her lap.

"The names of those whose essays have been selected by the judges are—I must mention here that the unusual excellence of all the essays submitted made a choice difficult—are Samuel Lincoln Willis, Henry Hodgeman Parker, Mabel Emma Rohlfs, Ruth Webster, Florence King Hawley, Thomas Breckenridge Newman, M——"

"Marcia!" thought Margaret.

"Margaret!" thought Marcia.

"Margaret Holyoke Carlin, and Marcia Duncan."

Margie felt suddenly weak and dizzy. She had not touched food that day, and she was hungry now.

Harry was the first of them all to speak.

"Gee whiz!" he said.

And they all applauded.

The eight congratulated each other, and were congratulated. Every one said openly he knew each of the others would win the final prize.

"Weren't you anxious?" Margie asked Tom.

"Not at all," he said. "It is a small matter. Why be perturbed?"

"Tom twisted his watch-chain clear in two while Mr. Harmon was speaking. I saw him," Walter told Margie afterward. "I was all

worked up, too. I knew you'd win, but I didn't know about Harry. He's an only child, you know, and his mother would have cried her eyes out if he hadn't got a part. Do you know what Sam did after he heard he was on the list?"

"No," said Margie.

"He went into the cloak-room and blubbered. When I went out there he said to me: 'Van Gelder, this is a momentous occasion. I am moved.' "

This set them to laughing till their sides ached. The idea of big, manly Sam crying because he had won a Commencement part.

"There are lots of different kinds of people in this world," Margie thought, "and they're all alike."

Commencement began to loom up large now, and the thing that haunted Margie most was the expense it involved. The class would have so much to pay for—programmes for Class Day and for Commencement, decorations, music, invitations, class photographs, the class annual, class pins, and the gift of '90 to the school. Beside this, there would be a graduating dress to buy. She had saved little. Her Greenville class had not paid well. One girl, whose father was rich, never paid at all, and her mother was angry when Margie sent a bill.

Mr. Carlin's salary was not large, and Betty's eyes had been operated on in the

winter. Margie knew that things would be managed somehow, for mother was a wonder-hand at managing, but she must content herself with a muslin graduating dress. None of the girls would be over-dressed, though one of them was to wear a frock that came from Paris; but soft China silks were in fashion that year, and Margie wanted one. She wanted, too, bronze slippers and silk stockings. Slippers did make such a difference. It seemed too bad to have anything you had to forget about on Commencement Day.

One of the shops showed in its window just the silk Margie wanted. It was soft and shimmering, with an irregular weave like linen. She looked at it every time she passed. A cheap silk would not do. Mrs. Carlin believed that a good cotton was infinitely better than a cheap silk. Margie never wore anything that was not good of its kind.

Margie felt that she could do herself justice better in a silk frock—that lovely, soft silk—than in a muslin. You never remembered your clothes when they were right. And mother could make it so beautifully. No trimming, but just mother's dainty stitches in soft tucks. All the other girls were going to wear silk.

"I won't think of it," Margie said to herself. "But I do wish I could have it."

Marcia's aunt in Chicago was to send her a

white *crêpe* as a present. The Carlins never had presents like that from their kinsfolk. Margie almost wished they did, but, of course, one couldn't take things to wear from people. It wasn't the Gordon way. Only Grandmother Carlin had ever sent her anything to wear, and grandmother was dead now. Bronze slippers in another window gave her a heartache.

"I won't look at them again," she decided. "I'll forget them, and think of my essay. I'll look well enough."

She still sent manuscripts to magazines now and then, and they came back to her at school. She did not want mother and Betty to know and be disappointed for her. Their sympathy made things harder. She could not bear to tell them about the silk and the slippers. Betty would feel so unhappy, because the operation on her eyes had cost so much. Margie did her best not to think of the silk and the slippers, and dreamed at night that Major Winchester was alive and had sent them to her.

Walter made little headway with his poem. His mother, he said, was to give him a diamond pin if he made a success of it.

"I don't care about the pin," he said, "but father and mother will be there. I can't make the darned lines scan."

Margie supposed a diamond pin must cost a hundred dollars. Twenty dollars would have

bought dress and slippers and stockings, too. Walter mustn't fail with the poem.

"Maybe I can help you," she said.

"Can you spare the time?" Walter asked.

"Of course," said Margie.

They spent all of one long afternoon out in the woods working over the poem. Walter did not take the horse and cart that day. Their favorite nook was easier to reach by the electric cars. More than one afternoon they had studied their Virgil out there with Glenda and Marcia and Harry. To-day they were alone and it was beautiful out there, beside a little stream that fell in a silver ribbon over brown rocks, to a wide pool below. Cow-bells tinkled a-far off, and now and then somebody passed along the path beyond the waterfall. There were other people out there, too, but Margie and Walter were alone in the Maytime world and the woods.

"I could write a Latin poem easier than I can an English one," Walter said. "I can almost think one up now. '*Rupes pastorum Margaretaque Walter et flumen.*' I bet you anything that scans."

"But we're not shepherds," said Margie. "Let's see your English poem."

"But we are '*Margaretaque Walter et flumen.*' It's nice out here. I could almost go to sleep."

"You mustn't. You must fix your mind on the poem."

"I'd rather let you fix yours," said Walter. "I don't want to think. I just want to sit here and do nothing."

Margie insisted on work. The poem was brought out. It was dactylic hexameter in places, but most of the lines had sprouted feet as prodigally as a centipede. It was full of classic allusions, and in the main was a defiance of old age.

"Thou shuttest the gates of our youth as Hesper the gates of Olympus" was the last line Walter had written.

"That's where I stuck," he said. "I wanted to say that '90 would live forever, and be always young, and all that, you know. But it doesn't scan unless you mispronounce a lot."

"Let's go on from there, and fix the first part afterward," Margie suggested.

They thought of Pandora's box, and made Old Age the first ill that escaped from it. They pleaded with him to spare them, and then showed him how powerless he was. They likened wrinkles to creases in rose-leaves. Time could never harm them because their hearts were young, and would never be any older. They put Old Age back into the box with sounding words, and unconquerable Youth turned the key on him."

"Do you ever think about being old?" Margie asked.

"Not very often," said Walter. "I suppose it'll just come along easy. All the people I like will be old, too, when I am."

"But maybe you won't be like them then. They may change."

"You won't change," said Walter. "You'll be the same Madgy."

Madgy was his name for her when they were alone.

"I don't know. It seems to me I change pretty often," she said. "How curly your hair is, Walter. I never saw it so much so before."

"It ought to be cut. I'm holding off so to have it done the day before Class Day. I want it short then."

"It looks better long," Margie said.

"You talk like my mother. She'd like me to let it grow long enough to do up. I hate the darned thing myself."

He smoothed the curl over his forehead, disgustedly.

"You don't hate it a bit. I believe you curl it on tongs, or put something on it."

"I use an invention of my own—'Van Gelder's Curnela,'" said Walter.

They laughed at that. Laughter came easily to them when they were together. They never argued. There was never anything to argue about.

"Let's get at the first of the poem now," Margie suggested.

"You fix it," said Walter. "You can do it better. Just fix it your way. If there are any words you can't read, tell me."

Margie bent over the poem. There was a word presently that she could not make out. She looked up at Walter. He was leaning back against his tree, asleep. He looked so comfortable she did not wake him. His face seemed a little sad, but not lifeless, like most people's faces when they slept. It was still good and honest and manly. She finished the few lines of the poem. It seemed lonely then, with Walter asleep.

"Wake up," she said.

Walter opened his eyes and smiled.

"Hello, Madgy," he said.

"What did you dream about?" she asked.

"Nothing. I never have dreamed."

"We'd better go now. It's getting chilly," said Margie.

"All right," Walter answered. "But I wish we could stay out here always. It's so comfortable doing nothing."

It was chilly in the open car going home.

"Your mother wouldn't let you go again if we didn't get back before sundown," he said. "We've got to hurry."

Margie was shivering when she reached home. Her throat was sore when she woke in the morning, but she went to school. The

Juniors were to give their reception and banquet to the Seniors that evening, and she did not want to miss it. Giving in to the sore throat would make going out in the evening impossible. She was hoarse all day, but she had a poem to recite at the banquet, and she would not give that up, either.

The reception began at seven, and the banquet was over at nine. There was an envelope for Margie in the letter-box as she came in. She tucked it into her pocket unopened. She knew what it was. Her poems always came back that way, and she did not want to spoil the evening by thinking about it just then.

There were toasts at the banquet, toasts drunk in lemonade, and Margie's turn came last. The narrow corridor where the table was set seemed to widen into a great banquet hall as she stood up to respond to "Our School." It was not a Junior party, it was the last meeting of long-time friends.

"The banquet's almost over,
The lights are burning low;
Fill the glasses to the brim,
We'll drink before we go!"

She tried to ring out the last line, but something seemed to deaden her voice. She could not feel it come out.

“We drink, not rare champagne,
Nor of the Spanish vine;
We drink the memories of years,
Good fellowship’s the wine.

“To thee we drink, old school,
To thee, with throbbing heart;
With smiles that we have known thee,
With tears that we must part.

“And forever and forever,
While our onward march we keep
To the sound of rising nations
And our own hearts’ steady beat,

“While the life-blood warms within us,
To the school we love the most,
From the great world’s wider school-room,
To thee, shall be our toast.

“The stars and night are fading,
The morning brightens cool,
But again before we sever,
A health to thee, old school.”

There was no ring in the last line. It came out in a hoarse whisper.

As she sat down, the unopened envelope dropped from her pocket. She picked it up and looked at it. She could open it now. Every-

body was getting ready to go home, and nobody would notice. Two more rejected poems wouldn't matter much. They were merely an attempt to be funny, and she wouldn't try to be funny again.

A crisp pink slip was pinned to the sheet of paper inside the envelope. She had never seen anything like it before. There must be some mistake.

"What's this?" she whispered hoarsely to Marcia.

"My goodness! A check for eighteen dollars," Marcia cried. "What is it for?"

"Verses," whispered Margie. "Just rhymes."

And oh, the beauty of it! The wonder of a world where things like that happened to you! The splendidness of having the silk dress and the bronze slippers. Oh, yes, indeed, it was a splendid world.

CHAPTER XXV.

AGAINST ODDS.

IT was wonderful to carry the check home to mother and Betty. They were so delighted. Margie was too hoarse to talk, and she was still a little uncertain as to whether the magazine could really have accepted her verses. It was the best known humorous weekly in America, and how on earth had she ever managed to write anything good enough for it? And the printed slip asking you "Please to accept the accompanying check and deposit it at your earliest convenience." It was the way checks came to real writers. Only a check couldn't mean so much to Mr. Howells or Mr. Bunner. It couldn't mean an absolutely dream-like silk dress and bronze slippers and perfect happiness.

Margie went to bed in a daze of bliss. Tomorrow would be Saturday, and the dress would be hers. She would buy it and carry it home. It was exactly like Christmas Eve in Gordonsville.

"I do believe I never was so happy over anything before," she thought.

In the morning she was still too hoarse to speak.

"You must go see Dr. Wilkins about that cold," Mrs. Carlin said.

The shopping could wait till Monday. It would be lovely to look forward to all day Sunday, and she could decide with mother and Betty how to make the dress. She passed the shop window on her way to the doctor's office, and saw, to her dismay, that the silk was gone. She hurried in and asked to see white silks. Yes, they still had hers. She took a sample of it. It seemed like taking a check for one's trunk. The silk was hers, and she and mother could claim it Monday.

Dr. Wilkins examined her throat, and asked her many questions. Had the deadening of the voice not been coming on a long time? Margie remembered now that it had. Dr. Wilkins said a great many things she did not understand.

"I think two months of treatment ought to set things right," he said. "At least, you won't be hoarse then."

"I have to speak at Commencement. That's just four weeks off," said Margaret, not quite understanding.

"You can't do it," said the doctor.

"Oh, please, please fix it so I can!" she broke

hoarsely out in terror. "I just must be able to speak. I can't give it up. Oh, please, can't you do something? I'd rather die than not speak."

"Oh, you're in the High School," said Dr. Wilkins. He had seen her only once or twice before. "I didn't quite place you. You're in Walter Van Gelder's class, aren't you?"

Margie nodded.

"Walter's a great friend of mine," said the doctor. "Let's look into that throat and those posterior nasal cavities again."

He shook his head over the examination.

"I don't see how it can be done," he said.

Margie broke down utterly.

"Don't cry," said Dr. Wilkins; "maybe we can fix things. You see, the trouble is that there will be several little operations, and they're a tax on the strength. You couldn't stand having them done so close together."

"I can stand anything," said Margie. "I know I can. I don't care what has to be done—do it."

"Could you come Monday?" Dr. Wilkins asked. "I'd do the worst thing then."

"Can't you begin now?"

"I could, but wouldn't you want somebody with you?"

"No; I want it done now."

The only thing she asked for was another chair. The one she was sitting in had no arms.

"I'll ask my assistant to come in and hold your head."

"I'll hold it still," she said. "I'd rather not have anybody watch me if it's going to be bad."

It was bad, horribly bad. She shut her eyes and held tightly to the chair.

"I must stand it," she thought. "I've got to stand it."

She did not move her head the fraction of an inch.

When it was over, she began to think of what all this treatment was going to cost. It would cost enough, she felt sure, to make having the dress impossible. What difference did giving up the dress make now? Being able to speak was all that mattered. She spoke to the physician about the cost.

"I'd like to pay eighteen dollars of it now," she said, taking out the check.

The doctor looked at the check with interest.

"Why, did you sell these people something?"

Margie nodded proudly.

"It's the first," she said.

"I wouldn't take it for the world," said Dr. Wilkins. "You'll never have another first check. You can pay me with your second check."

"Maybe there won't be a second," whispered Margie.

"Oh, yes, there will. I'll tell you how it is. I'm interested in this case. If I get you so you

can speak in a month, it will be one of the biggest jobs I ever did, and I'll read a paper on it at the next surgical congress. You can pay me out of the second check. I shan't charge you as much as I would if I weren't in a way making capital out of the thing. I don't send my bills out but twice a year. Yours will be nineteen dollars, and you'll get it in January."

Margie had no idea what his usual fees were, and this arrangement satisfied her.

"Come Monday," he said. "I'll do my best with you. And spend that check for the thing you want most in the world."

Marcia and Glenda came to see her on Sunday afternoon. It was hard to remember not to talk much, for looking over fashion magazines and discussing the style was so exciting. Glenda thought the sample was beautiful.

"It ought to be made some plain way, and very full," she said.

"That's the way I want it," said Margie. "Wide tucks around the skirt, and a round, shirred yoke."

"I'm going to make most of mine myself," said Glenda. "It'll all be machine work, and I won't bind a single seam. I don't see any sense in wasting time finishing a dress off on the inside. Nobody sees that."

"My grandmother used to have a conniption fit if anybody talked like that. I put on a stock-

ing once with a hole in it, and she quoted that thing about 'the gods see everywhere.' I told her I didn't care if they did, but she asked me how I'd feel if I had my leg broken and people took my shoe off and saw the hole," said Margie.

"I wouldn't think about my stockings if my leg was broken," said Glenda; "I'd think about the leg. I hate to mend things. It worries my mother awfully because I won't do fancy work."

"I have some of my great-grandmother's fancy work, and some of grandmother's, too," said Margie. "I'll show them to you."

"You oughtn't to talk so much with your throat sore," said Glenda. "Let us do the talking."

Margie brought out a quaint, old, beaded bag, and a shoulder cape of fine linen, yellow with age. The cape had a deep collar, and about the edge of both cape and collar ran exquisite embroidery.

"Why, it's got letters on it," said Marcia.
" '*Sic transit gloria mundi.*' "

"Grandmother squared her conscience that way," said Margie. "She didn't believe in pampering the unworthy body and encouraging it in wicked vanity, but she liked pretty things. The motto was to set a good example to the world."

"How funny!" said Marcia. "But the thing is beautiful."

"Imagine worrying about liking pretty

things," said Glenda. "Your grandmother must have been a lovely old person to live with."

"She was so good she made you want to be bad," said Margie. "When she made me learn the catechism, and explained to me about election, I went out and rooted up a whole flower-bed. I thought if the thing was settled anyway, I might as well be wicked and enjoy myself."

"I couldn't enjoy rooting up flowers," said Marcia. "I never had enough in my life."

"It wasn't the flowers," Margie explained; "it was the wickedness of rooting things up that I wanted."

"I hope we'll get lots of flowers at Commencement," said Marcia.

"I do wish we'd decide not to have any," said Margie. "I went to Commencement once down home, and some of the graduates didn't get any. Mother took a whole market basketful of bouquets so she could send them to the ones who didn't get any, and even things up a bit."

"I evened things up last year," said Glenda. "I was a flower-girl, and I took the cards off all the bouquets in the lobby and divided them evenly. I didn't see any sense in hurting people's feelings at Commencement."

Marcia and Margie laughed.

"Let's get the class to agree not to have flowers sent to the church. No flowers," said Margie.

"Oh, you'd get as many as anybody," said Marcia. "You needn't worry."

"Don't you think I can ever have an unselfish idea?" asked Margie, not at all vexed.

"Not so it would be perceptible to the naked eye; but you're right about the flowers. We'll vote not to have any. Glenda wouldn't be on hand with her inventive genius. Glenda has a splendid mind. I'm going now. I have to learn my part. I changed 'generally' to 'usually.' "

Margie had her part to learn, too, and the prophecy beside. It was not possible to dispose of the whole class of sixty in a short speech. Even by grouping the less conspicuous ones, the prophecy would take nearly twenty minutes to read, and she meant to be letter perfect in it.

But learning the two speeches was not all. The elocution teacher told her they must be rehearsed. This was a difficulty Margie had not considered.

"I can't rehearse," she said. "Dr. Wilkins says I mustn't use my voice any more than I can help. I don't see what I'll do about it."

"You couldn't give your essay without rehearsing," said the teacher. "Delivery counts half, you know. The Auditorium is a big place to speak in, and you'll have to be able to make yourself heard."

Margie's heart sank. She was bearing Dr. Wilkins' treatment very well, and he seemed

more hopeful every time he saw her, but rehearsing was entirely out of the question.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said the teacher. "I'll read your essay over to you and you can practise it at home. Try to remember it as I say it, and perhaps toward the end you can rehearse it once or twice. You'd better let somebody else read the prophecy, anyway."

The elocution teacher read the essay beautifully, but Margie felt perfectly blank when she had finished it. Of course, the teacher must know how it ought to be read, but she didn't make the different things mean what Margie meant by them. She read "Galvani's fame rests——" and a pause, "on a few frog legs." It sounded like a bit of pleasantry, and that was not what it was intended for. If people laughed there, the rest would fall flat. She tried to appear grateful for the favor, but the elocution teacher was cutting the throat of an essay she loved.

If the prophecy would be changed that way, by having somebody else read it—it ought to be said, anyway, not read. It wouldn't go at all in any other way. What a way the world had of changing every time you began to call it splendid! Will Holmes offered to read the prophecy.

"I'll read it over a lot of times so I can keep my face straight when the time comes," he said.

Oh, dear, to have anybody read it and laugh!

Nothing could be funny unless the person who read it kept from laughing. Walter was the only person who could read it at all, and Walter had the poem to read.

She thanked Will, and let him take the prophecy. If it had to be done, it had to be. But, oh, how silly it would sound! There was a part, too, that ought to be rattled off fast, and he wouldn't do it.

"If I find at the last minute I can speak it," she said to Will, "I'll do it. I know it now by heart, and maybe I won't be hoarse then."

Will had the words of the Class Song to write. Miss Marshall spoke to Margie about it.

"I wish you'd look over it," she said. "It doesn't fit the tune he picked out the way it is."

It was hard to change the verses without hurting Will's feelings.

"We hold the palm of Victory,"

one stanza ran.

"The dust no longer obscures our sight,
Now forward into the world we go,
To labor onward and to fight."

"I like the idea," said Margie, trying to think of a way to get rid of "labor onward." "But I don't believe fight is a good singing word. It is a hard vowel to sing."

“Is it?” asked Will.

Margie had no idea whether it was or not, but she said a singer had told her so.

“A or ah are easier sounds,” she said. “It makes a great difference in the way a song sounds what vowel you use. It isn’t like spoken poetry.”

“What sound is there we could use?” Will asked.

“Let me see,” said Margie. “Aim—blame—came—fame—came—fame.”

“I couldn’t say, ‘Dust has came,’ could I? I want to bring in dust. It’s in the motto.”

“The dust of battle——”

“O’er us came!” said Will. “That fits it. ‘The dust of battle o’er us came,’ he sang. ‘That’s better than the way I had it before. It’s the same idea. Now, the last line—I could end it with fame.”

“Palms of some two-syllable word—fame,” said Margie. “Now out into the world we go, to dum dum palms of dum dum fame.”

Will considered for a few minutes.

“I’ve got it,” he cried. “To strive for palms of greater fame.”

“That’s good,” said Margie. “It’s the same idea you had before, and I think it will be better to sing.”

“I think so, too,” Will agreed.

“And nobody’ll hear the words, anyway,” she

thought to herself. "I hope to goodness Glenda won't say she can't see any sense in it."

The matter of the essay troubled her. She went with it to Mrs. Morgan, who had taught her all she knew of Physical Culture.

"Read it to me softly," Mrs. Morgan said, "and when I see exactly what you want to say in every line, I'll read it."

This was splendid. Mrs. Morgan read it so it seemed to mean what it was intended to mean. More than that, she showed Margie how to bring out every point. She read it again and again, till Margie knew just how she gave it the right sound in every place.

"I like it," said Mrs. Morgan, "but it needs a picture in it somewhere, a touch, just a little touch of something dramatic. Most essays lack that when you turn them into orations."

"We're allowed to make any changes we like," said Margie. "I'll try to illustrate one picture some way. I think I see what you mean."

All the way to school every morning she said her essay over in her mind.

"If I can speak loud enough to be heard," she thought, "I know how I want to do it."

But not being able to rehearse was a fearful handicap. All the others were rehearsing almost daily. Marcia had such a clear voice, and Sam such a big one, and Tom was so learned. His oration was to be on "Modern Tendencies."

The very name was discouraging to any one who had chosen "Circumstances," and written out an essay without looking up anything. Marcia had selected "The Woman of To-morrow," and Sam's oration would be on "Politics, in Practice and in Theory." They were all such big subjects, and Margie knew that Marcia had read ever so many deep books before she began to write her essay.

"And I just slap-dashed mine off," she thought. "It's only what I think of things. I wish I'd chosen something hard."

The boys who were not to speak were making bets on the winner of the Commencement prize. It was a dictionary on an iron stand, and winning it would be a greater achievement than being elected President of the United States. The bets were trifling, but the betting was spirited.

"I've got a lot of bets on you," Walter told Margie.

"It doesn't seem exactly right to bet. I'd hate to have you lose."

"It isn't money. Most of it's candy and neckties. The only money I've got up is with Verdant Greenness Johnson. He made me mad, and I made him write it down—five to one."

Margie did not understand at all.

"If I win, do you get five dollars?" she asked.

"Yes," said Walter.

"And if I lose, do you have to pay him five?"

"No; I don't lose but one."

Margie began to see.

"That means he thinks I won't win, doesn't it? He's so sure I won't he's willing to risk five dollars."

Walter looked uncomfortable.

"I wish you wouldn't ask about it. I didn't mean to tell you."

"But that's what it means?"

"Yes; but he's afraid of you. He wanted to back out afterwards, and I wouldn't let him. I've got my setter pup bet against another fellow's knife. That's how sure I feel. I'd take a hundred to one shot on you."

"I wish you'd tell me——"

"Glenda's fixed it so she'll win no matter who gets the prize. She's bet that you and Sam and Tom and Marcia will all lose. And she's bet with other people that you'll all win."

"Did she bet I'd win, too?"

"Yes, that was with me. If you win I pay her two pounds of candy, and she has to pay other people three pounds, because Tom and Marcia and Sam don't win. If you lose she has to pay me a pound, and three of the girls a pound apiece, because she loses on her other bets, and she wins from each of them except from the person who picks out the winner."

Margie laughed.

"How much candy does that give her?"

"I did know till I tried to explain. Now, she bet two to one on Marcia with somebody else, and two to one either against or for Sam, I forget which, to even it up."

"Suppose none of us four wins? There are four beside us, you know. Does Glenda win, then? If she has two to one against me, and two to one for Marcia, and two to one, one way or the other, on Sam, and one on each of us both ways, and Harry, say, wins. How much will she have then?"

"You'd have to do that by Pi R square to get any answer," said Walter. "Glenda didn't think about the other four. If she does I don't know how she'll bet. She wouldn't bet even after you——" Walter stopped suddenly. "You'll win, anyway," he said, hastily.

"You were going to say after I had this trouble with my voice," Margie said. "Was it that way with the other things?"

"I wish you wouldn't ask questions," said Walter. "I'd bet anything I had had that you'll win. I know you will. Glenda's a hedger. She bet against both you and Marcia."

"But she didn't bet five to one against Marcia. I know she didn't. Are they betting on us all?"

"Yes," said Walter. "Nothing much, but everybody likes to bet."

"I wish you'd tell me one thing, Walter: Who do most of them think will win?"

"It's an even gamble. Most of them thought you would at first. For goodness' sake, Madgy, don't keep asking questions. I'd take a hundred to one shot on you any time."

"I have only one chance in a hundred," said Margie. "But I'm just not going to give in."

"Sam's already lying awake nights, wondering how he'll carry the dictionary home," said Walter. "Last year Jo Ward had a man hired beforehand, he was so anxious to be prepared. And he didn't get it. It isn't safe for anybody to count on getting anything till the thing's over."

"I am going to count on it," said Margie. "I might as well stop trying to make myself think I don't count on it. I do. I'm going to put up the best fight I possibly can. It won't kill me to lose, but I won't lose if I can help it."

"You won't lose," said Walter, but his tone lacked confidence. The odds were heavy against her.

CHAPTER XXVI.

PALMA NON SINE PULVERE.

THE Wednesday of Class Day came in without a cloud in the sky. All morning the Seniors were busy with the last touches of the decorations. The stage in the Assembly Hall was draped in myrtle green and Nile bunting. The banner of genius and '90 was crowned with flowers. 'Ninety had intended having palms, but palms were too expensive to cut up. Two of them, in tubs, flanked the banner. At the back of the stage, on a background of white, was "Palma non sine pulvere" in silver paper. Everybody had helped cut out the letters, drawn by Marcia, and Sam had pasted them on the sheet.

Above the motto stretched the Stars and Stripes. Glenda had wanted it draped below, but, to Margie's mind, nothing must ever hang above the flag, nor must it be tortured into festoons. It would have looked better below, Glenda thought, but that was not the point with Margie. The Gordons had a feeling about the

flag. Even Uncle Fred, who had been a Confederate, never let anyone trample the Stars and Stripes if he could help it, and it was safer for people not to discuss the matter with him. The flag meant a part of the splendor of the world. The war record of her family was a great pride to her, and the most splendid thing in it was the time when Great-Uncle John saw the Confederates burst from the woods and come yelling across a wide field to the hill where he and his men stood, and they looked so splendid that Uncle John swung off his hat and shouted: "Give 'em three cheers, boys; they're our countrymen. And now give them——" exactly what war was.

Lincoln and the flag were two things Margie thought about with a thrill in the roots of her hair. She had urged the class to give a bust of Lincoln to the school as their farewell gift. Lincoln came from Illinois, and mother had spoken with him many a time. The class wanted to give a bust—plaster busts made a great show for the money—but they chose Pallas Athene, to Margie's disgust. Still, Pallas Athene did seem more appropriate. If you gave a bust of Lincoln it wouldn't be Class Day. It would be a Lincoln Day. Pallas Athene, draped in white, sat on her pedestal at one side of the stage.

The Assembly Hall looked better than ever before in its history. No other class had ever

trimmed it up so artistically. 'Eighty-nine had spent more money, but '90 had taste. After it was all done there was just time to flutter home, and dress in a flutter, and flutter back again to be ready to march in at two.

There was no flutter when you marched in. Seniors were above that sort of thing.

The hall was packed to suffocation. How well the duet went!—"The Invitation to the Dance," and how easy and witty and impressive Harry was as he stood up to welcome the audience. And Louis Horton's farewell address as president of the Debating Society was dignified. Tom fairly withered the lower classes with his speech of advice to them. It was witty, too, and precisely what it ought to have been. The Juniors were such children.

Glenda, instead of telling about the Boadiceans, as the boys expected, told all the girls had found out concerning the boys' secret society, the Spartans. The girls had climbed into the cold-air flue to listen, and Glenda described everything that happened at one meeting—even the things they had said about the girls.

Then, to the surprise of the girls, Sam, who had pretended to have no Class Day part, described an initiation in the Boadiceans. It was the most ridiculous thing ever heard. He made it all out of whole cloth, described how the girls all talked at once and said mean things and got

mixed on parliamentary rules. It was funny, though, and Margie enjoyed it more than the Boadiceans did, though everybody laughed.

The class history interested her less. She had been not quite two years a member of '90.

Then came music again, and after that the class poem. How they cheered Walter, and how the heartiness of their cheering embarrassed him. There were his mother and father half-way back at one side, and how pleased they looked. He went through it perfectly, too, only that after the Pandora's box line he said:

“Old Age then escaping his prison,
Gaunt and revengeful first issued.”

“Decrepit” was the word, not “revengeful,” and “revengeful” was so much better.

The class photographer had immense sheets of paper fastened together at the top, and hung on an easel. Harry's picture came first. It was a butterfly, with a huge necktie on. The class laughed at once, and the audience laughed, too, when Mabel described him as flitting from flower to flower. He was the beau of the class.

They laughed again at Tom's picture. It was a school-house with “Co-education” over the door, and Tom down in one corner shedding large tears.

There was the dollar bill for Glenda, and

Marcia's line about seeing no sense in it. And for Walter, a picture of a grub; "He won't be happy till he gets it."

Sam was a giant, with St. Anthony mashed flat under his foot, and Ruth Webster poking at the victim with a telegraph pole.

Marcia's picture was somebody labeled Ruskin, and somebody labeled Socrates, and a third labeled Michael Angelo, all on their knees before Marcia, who paid them no attention. She was busy rewriting Roberts' Rules of Order.

Margie kept wondering what her picture would be. Perhaps they'd make her a writer or maybe—no, they wouldn't bring in the swelled head on Class Day. None of the pictures or the speeches that went with them were the kind that hurt. They poked fun, but in a funny way. She had guessed who was meant in nearly every picture. The heart's-ease for Florence Hawley puzzled her most. She had not expected sentiment among the pictures, but Florence was lovable, though not so interesting as Marcia nor so amusing as Glenda. And the ring with the diamond in it, whom could that stand for?

"With many facets," said Mabel, "equally brilliant on each of them. The only solitaire in our class ring, Margaret Carlin."

Margaret felt her eyes fill with tears, and tears did not come easily to her. The class applauded; they seemed to think the picture good.

Could they really agree to such a compliment as that? How splendid it was of them, and how kind! How good they had always been to her, letting her come in and giving her a place among them, when she was a stranger, and hadn't been a Fourth and a Third with them. Did they, could they really believe she could do things? She was almost sorry mother and Betty were in the audience. After the mean way she had talked at home about her fights and tricks at school. It hadn't been a fight. 'Ninety had let her have things.

A few more pictures now, and then would come the prophecy. Margie whispered to Will Holmes:

"I can say it," she said. She must do her best for '90.

It was the last thing on the programme, and the audience was tired. Margie forgot all about her voice as she went forward. The people down there must be made to take an interest. She would look at them so hard, talk to each one of them so directly, that they must sit up and listen.

"It's a theory of a modern philosopher," she began, speaking as if she were saying it to the Utile Dulces, "that each of us is not one person all his life, but a series of individuals of various degrees of differentiation. To-day we are not what we were yesterday, nor what we shall be

to-morrow. Somewhere in the universe exist the beings we have been, and the other beings we shall be. All we need to do to see these other selves of ours is to step outside the rule of Time. I will not stop to explain how I did this. Suffice it, that I found the way by a process which involves passing through the fourth dimension of space. This point reached, the ethereal essence is beyond the control of time. I stepped at once from 1890 into 1900 and odd. The city was little changed. St. Anthony had been taken in as a suburb. I walked up a street and I met a dear little boy in knickerbockers, with a large bow under his chin."

It was unnecessary to mention Harry's name after that: He had studied medicine, Margie said, and set out to discover an elixir of youth.

" 'My great mistake,' he said, 'was in not being a homeopath. I took too much of the thing. A few drops would have kept me the age I was. I grew younger. I went back to school a Senior, and graduated a Fourth. The girl I loved, the last one, won't let me play in her yard now. I'm too young.' "

He ran away then, for one of his former classmates, on whom he had experimented, came down the street. Harry had found something to make people grow, but, by mistake, had given it to this man as a liniment for a sore throat. It settled in his throat, which was now so long

he had to wear it wound round a spool. Two girls who had never done anything in the class, and a third who was gentle and kind, were taking care of Harry in their Home for Friendless Boys. Another group of conspicuous ones went off to civilize the natives of San Adobe Frijoles, with the by-laws of the General Debating Society as their basis of civilization. Walter had a factory for making Van Gelder's Curnena. It curled hair so tightly that in the end it pulled it out by the roots, so that Walter gave up selling it for anything but furniture polish. Rubbed on, it turned plain pine into curly maple.

Tom was a book agent. This was the part to rattle off. He had a long speech about how fine his book was. It was a History of Marcia, First Dictator of the Boadicean Republic, formerly America. Tom sold it to women entirely, he said. Colleges were no longer open to men, and few of them could read.

Sam was owner of the Western Union, which he had won when the government raffled it off.

And Ruth Webster, Margie had meant the lines about her as a deep and subtle stab. She pictured Ruth introducing a speaker at a mass-meeting. She was greeted with cheers.

"They paid her a tribute that a queen might have been proud to receive," Margie said. "Paid it, not because of her eloquence, for her

words were few and simple; not because of her political power, for she was not a politician; not to her wit, nor to her wealth, but to herself, that rarest of rare things, a perfect and womanly woman."

There was no stab in it as Margie said it. It sounded like a touch of honest sentiment, and Margie meant it to sound so.

Marcia was shown as dictator, and Glenda as speaker of the Boadiceans' House. No laws were passed, because Glenda would not entertain any but sensible motions. And Margie went beyond the speech she had prepared to add that no laws were needed under so just a person as Marcia.

In closing, she said that she stepped back into 1890, although she could have chosen any age in the past or in the future.

"I saw all the times that have been or shall be, the glory that was, and the glory that is to come, and I wanted most to come back, and go onward as '90 goes, into the splendid world that '90 will make more splendid still."

And it was not at all the ending that she had prepared.

Afterward such a round of congratulations from everybody to everybody else, then Marcia and Sam and the rest of them were off to rehearse in the Auditorium that evening, and Margie was left to remember the odds against her.

The chance seemed smaller on Thursday. She had not remembered her voice on Class Day, but the speech was long, and she had made more of an effort to be heard than she knew. She went to Dr. Wilkins Thursday morning, and again on the morning of Commencement, Friday.

"We won't give in yet," he said. "Go home and go to bed. Come down here on your way to the Auditorium. Give me twenty minutes, and we'll see. I don't promise."

Margie went home, and to bed. It surprised her ever afterward to think that she slept all afternoon. If she thought of anything it was about Gordonsville and Lena Bean and Belinda Betts, the doll.

When she woke, several pleasant things had happened. A box of Cape jasmine had come from Cousin Cyrus in Texas. Mother said she must wear one in her hair. All the girls were to wear flowers in their hair. Walter had sent her two dozen La France roses, but the Cape jasmine came from Cousin Cyrus, and Cousin Cyrus was a Gordon. Margie laid aside the freshest of the jasmine to take to the Auditorium with her. Walter should have one, and Harry one, too, and the rest could go to any of the class who had forgot to bring flowers. There were other flowers, too, from classmates, and some from Mary Blair, in Greenville, and a little sachet bag from the conductor's daughter, and

a beautiful book from another Gordon cousin. The dress was perfect, and the slippers the most beautiful in the world.

Mother and father and Betty were to go to the Auditorium early, to get good seats.

"If they can hear me anywhere," Margie thought, "they can hear me everywhere."

Dr. Wilkins did something new to her throat. Something that made her feel that she had no throat at all.

"Now, don't open your mouth again till you begin to speak," he said. "We'll see, and good luck to you. I'll be there."

Of course, it was impossible to keep still when everybody was chattering and saying how nice everybody else looked, in the dressing-room. Afterward, when they marched out and took their seats in semi-circular rows on the stage, things were solemn. Every one of the eight wanted the dictionary; four of them meant to do or die.

The boys looked years older than they had done on Class Day. They seemed men, and leaders of men, in their black coats and their white ties. Nobody whispered and nobody giggled. It was the most solemn occasion of everybody's life. The Governor and three thousand people were out there in front, on the floors, in the gallery, in the aisles, packed in till there was scarcely room to breathe. The world was waiting for '90 to prove itself.

Florence Hawley was Salutatorian. The salute shortened her essay.

"I needn't be afraid of her," Margie thought. Marcia and Tom and Sam were the only ones she did fear, till Mabel Rohlfs began her "Square Pegs in Round Holes." It was so good that it started even Tom into looking nervous. Nobody had expected it of Mabel.

Tom followed her. To everybody's amazement, Tom forgot his lines. The prompter came to his rescue twice, and Tom had always been so cool about things. You could not tell whether his speech was good or bad when you had to feel that you were pushing to keep him along.

Marcia's turn came just before Margie. She saw that Marcia began to speak too soon. The audience applauded each speaker as soon as Mr. Harmon called out the name. The house was not quite still when Marcia began. She spoke a little too fast. But how well she handled the subject!

Margie shut her mind to what Marcia was saying.

"I could have done better if I could have come before her," she thought. "After Tom was the best time."

She looked out into the audience. The people in the back of the house were leaning forward. A man in the gallery had his hand behind his ear. Marcia was not speaking loud enough.

"If she had gone two steps farther forward it would have been better," Margie thought. She was afraid to think of what Marcia was saying. A light reflected from somebody's eyeglasses flashed out in the audience. She wondered if she would be frightened when her turn came. Marcia didn't seem to be.

The applause after Marcia's speech was the loudest and longest yet.

"Margaret Holyoke Carlin," Mr. Harmon announced, as it ceased.

Walter was sitting behind Margie.

"I've bet another box of candy," he whispered. "Even this time."

Margie walked forward. Knees were trembling under her, but they didn't seem to be her knees. She had forgotten how her speech began. The frog leg part seemed all of it, but still she was not frightened. The speech would begin after a while. The prompter whispered the line. The house thought she was merely waiting for utter stillness. She did not hear the prompter. She took a step farther forward, and the speech began to say itself.

"Some one has said that every man is the architect of his own fortune."

Some one near the stage smiled a bored smile. It was a trite beginning. Margie meant it to be. She could not feel her voice, but the man in the gallery sat back and folded his arms.

It was Margaret who spoke after that.

"Man is only a builder, not an architect. Forces beyond his control draw the plans, and Circumstance furnishes the material. Both plans and material are beyond the builder's power to choose. It is only in his power to build as best he can. Epictetus has it that each one of us has his part to play in the world. No man can choose his part, but it is his to choose how he will play it, well or ill.

"Magnificent palaces are not built of sticks and clay. So, in the world, it happens that men fitted for success in one occupation are driven by Circumstances to seek another, and so build failures. The world is full of such men, men who might have been statesmen, philosophers, scientists, whom Circumstances have made slaves to poverty, men forced to toil day after day, year after year, for the mere existence of themselves and those dependent on them, till the time when their abilities could have been developed is gone, and what they might have been is forgotten in what they are."

And then, turning to another side of the matter, she spoke of men fitted for mechanics, who, by circumstances of birth, or wealth, take up professions and fail.

"Pettifogging attorneys, dull-witted physicians, and stupid ministers of the Gospel," she said,

"No act is right or wrong, but as Circumstances make it so. There are times when it is a duty to break the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill.' The sheriff who springs the trap of the scaffold commits the same act for which the murderer dies. It is merely that the circumstance of the motive is different."

A little later she said:

"The circumstance of Mohammed's epilepsy made Oriental millions Moslem. The circumstance of Christian persecution made Christianity spread, for, as friction generates heat, so persecution develops zeal. The most trivial accidents have made men famous. The most wonderful discoveries have been stumbled on. Galvani's fame rests on a few frog legs."

The Eugene Aram line was out at last.

"The pole about which the earth turns is a point without dimensions. One move of a chessman has changed a dynasty."

And here came the picture. She saw it all plainly.

"In the old days of the Moors in Spain, the heir to the throne is defeated by the usurper and confined in a castle outside Grenada. The usurper on his death-bed sends orders that the prince be instantly killed. Captive and jailer sit at chess, and the orders are put by unopened till the game be finished."

[Oh, yes, there they sat over the chessboard,

and outside the narrow window the plain was hot and yellow in the sun.]

“Fortune smiles on the jailer. His queen rides victorious down the board. Bishops, rooks and pawns fall before her. Suddenly an unnoticed knight bars her path. The jailer sits puzzling over his next move. Down the dusty road from Grenada the Prince sees hurrying horsemen.”

[Oh, yes, they are plain. The straining of their horses, the flash of their crimson and blue, the gleam of steel. They are riding, riding on the dusty road from Grenada.]

“The queen hesitates.”

[You can hear the beat of the hoofs.]

“The jailer’s hand moves from piece to piece.”

[He has not heard anything, dull, dark, stupid man.]

“The queen makes a false move, and as the Prince says ‘Checkmate,’ into the room burst panting, dust-covered courtiers.

“‘The King is dead. Long live the King!’”

[And you shout with them. You are one of them, dusty, crimson and blue. You fling your hand out with them, “Long live the King!”]

After that it was nothing to feel unconquerable, and Spartan.

“Every man is his own master. Every act he does is of his own accord. No power in the world can compel him to do anything he does not

will to do. All the tortures mediæval ingenuity could devise had no power to wring from the martyr's lips one word of recantation unless he first said to himself, 'I will recant.' "

[Oh, you'd have held out forever. Nothing they could do—and you heard chains clanking—could make you open your lips.]

"The master may beat the slave, but he cannot alter that slave's opinion one jot nor tittle. This inalienable right to self is the divine right of man. Circumstances may mar fortunes, may oppose every act and hem in one every side, but they have no power to touch the soul, the self.

"To the soul that has been strengthened by adversity, strengthened by suffering, and by defeat spurred on to success, belongs the power to rise equal to the gods, and be stronger than the strongest force in the universe, the force of Circumstances."

Margie walked back to her seat.

The instant the last word was spoken, the last thrill of it gone, she remembered everything in Marcia's speech.

"Marcia quoted Ruskin and Herbert Spencer," she thought, and it was the thought that took the place of frog legs in her mind.

And Sam—yes, Sam's was good, but nobody could care much whether politicians practised what they preached or not. It was not until he began, "And now, to you, teachers of the Cen-

tropolis High School, the Class of 'Ninety bids farewell," that Sam became great. How splendidly he said good-bye. That was true eloquence. It was the end, and '90 felt it. The Governor of the State and three thousand people felt it to the bottom of their hearts.

"We go out into the world armed for the fray, and unafraid, and we take with us memories of four happy years—years of stress and turmoil, hard work and hard study, but years of good-will and friendship, years that we shall look backward to in the days to come with tender regret. Years that will live in our hearts forever."

It was the finest speech ever made in the English language.

And why did the band play a cheerful thing? Hadn't the judges retired to chop off heads? Margie was past thinking coherently.

"Marcia quoted Ruskin and Herbert Spencer," was the one great fact in the universe.

She had time to think it ten million times before the judges came in. They went out before the first chapter of Genesis, and the Millennium had come twice before they came back. All the while the band played, "and Marcia had quoted Ruskin and Herbert Spencer."

At the end of ten minutes the judges returned to their seats. The President of the Board of Education was one of the five that made up the committee.

He was a Torquemada style of man.

He began by saying that in making their decision the judges had considered three points: literary style, delivery and preparation of subject.

After that he talked for the lifetime of an average man on everything on earth.

Every time you thought he was on the point of telling who had won the dictionary, he smiled and went off into another long explanation. He boiled you in oil till you felt that if he didn't say who won the next time he came near it, you'd jump at him and tear him to pieces. Even the audience grew tired of the spectacle of torture before his fiendish soul was satisfied. When he did say the name it came unexpectedly, and stopped Margie in the middle of "Marcia quoted Ruskin and Spencer." The name was her own. There was no mistake. He said it was the unanimous decision of the judges. And dismay filled her. How on earth was she going to carry the dictionary and the iron stand home in the street-car? How on earth was she going to do it?

"I knew you'd win," Walter said in the roar of applause from all the house. "Don't look so dazed. Wake up."

Margie woke up. She had won—she had won. Her whole life had been one progress of magnificent triumphs. Nothing had ever hap-

pened to her that was not splendid, and this was so stupendous and colossal in its splendidness.

Marcia did not look disappointed, not very much so, anyway. She took it quite naturally, just as if it were an ordinary thing for people to win dictionaries.

"You deserved it," she said to Margie, as the distribution of diplomas, tied with the class colors, went on. "I was scared. Your essay was better than mine, anyway. I quoted too much. Yours was all your own."

"I'm too absolutely happy to say a thing," said Margie. "I want to go home."

Mother and Betty had gone on. Father waited for her, but Walter said he wanted to go home with her. They walked, and they did not talk of Margie's essay nor of the dictionary. It stayed at the Auditorium till Walter went after it next day. Margie did not want to talk.

Things seemed a little blank to her. Something was lacking. She had won, but Centropolis was only Centropolis. It was not Gordonsville. The earth beneath her was not the soil from which she sprang. It was a splendid world, but she wanted to go home.

[THE END.]

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